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LECTURES ON PREACHING

Lectures on Preaching

DELIVERED IN THE DIVINITY SCHOOL,
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BY

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THE lectures which follow are published in deference to the wish of those who heard them. The lectures were spoken. What is offered in this volume is little other than the shorthand writer's report. As such I hope they will be read. A protracted illness has delayed their publication. I desire to express my thanks to my friends Archdeacon Waugh and Professor Ryle, who, when I was forbidden all work, undertook the ungrateful task of reading the proof-sheets.

W. B. RIPON.

February 1895.

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LECTURE I

I HAVE to speak to you on the subject of preaching. It is a subject of commanding interest, especially to you who are looking forward to the work of ministry in the Church of Christ.

There was a phrase employed by an English statesman which became famous in its time. He spoke of the need which the state had of men of "light and leading." The phrase aptly describes the twofold aspect of the preacher's work. I need hardly remind you of the difference between the men of light and the men of leading. The man of light gives us knowledge and

truth, and their value is quite independent of the man who gives it: but the man of leading leads because of certain qualities in himself which come into activity when in contact with men.

The function of the man of light is to unfold some truth. He is the man who enlarges our sphere of knowledge, and sheds new light upon the dark places of the world or of ourselves. He is Columbus, increasing our knowledge of the geography of the globe. He is Newton, giving us clearer light respecting the order of the universe. He is Harvey, disclosing to us something fresh concerning the constitution of our bodies and making us understand ourselves the better. In like manner the preacher must have a message which brings light to the minds of men. He need not, like the poet, aspire "to justify the ways of God to

men," but he must be an interpreter of the eternal moral order, of the significance of life, of the subtle processes of the heart of man. He must, in a sense, when once within

> "the pulpit-place,
> Interpret God for all."

Or, to translate the same thought into sacred and familiar language, he must have an eternal word of God to deliver to men, a message which is more than man's word.

The preacher must thus be a man of light. But he must needs be a man of leading also. His work brings him into contact with the people. If he has light to shed upon them, it must be transmitted to them through the medium of his personality. It is here that the human touch is felt. It is here that the function of leadership comes into play. The

preacher is not one who influences men through the medium of the newspaper article or the written treatise. He is the public speaker whose personality is, in a fashion, the chief thing about him. He is not like the discoverer or inventor whose moral and personal qualities are of no moment, because his work is purely intellectual and impersonal; he is a man whose personality must affect everything that he says and does. In all works, save those of pure science, the personal element plays its part, and especially in all creative workmanship. We feel the personal differences of Wordsworth and Byron in their poetry. We know that the one places a cooling palm upon our forehead, while the touch of the other is always feverish. We can feel the serene detachment from life's affairs which the canvas of Raphael discloses; the world

is nothing to the painter, kings may make war and nations may perish, but the colours on his brush will take no sad or ruddy hue in consequence. On the other hand, we can feel the passionate and superb human interest in the work of Michael Angelo ; his hand trembles with emotion ; sorrowful sympathy with human affairs gives vehemence and vividness to his touch. The personal qualities of the painters reveal themselves on their canvas. It is the same with the great composers of music. Who has listened to Berlioz's *Faust* or Wagner's *Löhengrin* without becoming conscious of the difference between the two men ? Berlioz has seen Faust and Mephistopheles in the streets of Paris, and has heard the bustle and hustle of the weird procession overhead. Wagner has lived apart from his age and in the companionship of sights and sounds which have

little in common with the glare and the glitter of modern cities. Men express themselves as well as their theme in their works. The force of personality not only works beneath the form, but makes itself seen and felt throughout. The personal element must be an important factor in all creative work. The real self of the man cannot but make itself felt in his work. Self-suppression is next to impossible, and never more so than in the sermon. But further, it is undesirable. However greatly a man may wish to let the naked truth do its work, he cannot forgo the aid of emotion and personal conviction. To speak or to preach as though the message we have to deliver were a matter of indifference to ourselves is to invite its rejection. How can we persuade others, if we are not persuaded ourselves?

It is this deep and real influence of per-

sonality which makes such marked difference between preachers. You know how the same message delivered by different men may become almost a different message. One messenger delivers it in such a sort that we feel a pleasure in receiving it; the message carries with it a genial tone which is most welcome. Another delivers it in a fashion which provokes our resentment,—we will have none of it. In the same way preachers may be quite agreed as to the message of God to men, but one delivers it in a perfunctory and indifferent style as though he had no interest in it; another in a hard and peremptory fashion as though he liked the official right of giving the message, but had no personal affection for the message itself; while a third speaks his message persuasively as though his heart were in it, and as one who is alive to the meaning and the object of the

message itself. It is with these things as with a landscape seen under different aspects. When the rain is falling or the fog is enveloping the hills and meadows, we find it difficult to realise the beauty of the scene which, seen in clear sunlight, is a pure beauty and a joyous memory for ever. Some preachers preach a damp gospel; others enfold it in fog; the true-hearted man sheds over it the sunlight of his own conviction, or, better still, of the divine love which he has realised as the basis of all divine utterances.

As a matter of history, the charm of the great preachers of the past has lain in something which their published sermons could never have produced. Those who heard Newman preach tell us that it was not exactly the thing said which impressed them, but the sense of the preacher's personality as it passed across the

manuscript to the hearer's heart. Another illustration of the same principle is given us in Dr. Chalmers's life. He was fond of preaching his old sermons. He did so openly, giving notice of his intention; but the crowds still came to hear from his lips even sermons which were in print. The personal force of the man gave something which the printed words could not give. The words became luminous as they sprang from his lips. This fact explains that disappointment which comes to us when we read the sermons of some well-known preacher. Dean Kirwan's sermons, for example, and even George Whitfield's, sadly disappoint us. In reading them we can hardly understand the tears and the lavish offerings which were drawn from the people who heard these famous men. But here, it is evident, it is not enough to read. We must have heard the man

to understand him and his power. The secret lay in the magnetic influence of personality. This it was which won for Kirwan his wondrous ascendency over the charity of the people of Dublin. He gave out his own self in the sermon. As it was said of him, "in feeding the lamp of charity, he exhausted the lamp of life." This it was which gave Whitfield his power over the rough Somersetshire colliers: he was real, he was in earnest, his soul was in his words. The tears, which made channels down grimy cheeks, were due to that wondrous, indefinable, personal power which knits soul to soul in living sympathy. I think that it is in the light of this principle that we can best understand Demosthenes' saying that the first, second, and third requisite for the orator was action. This of course does not mean mere gesture, as Julius Hare

pointed out long ago. By action Demosthenes alludes, I think, to the orator's capacity for self-identification with his message. The speaker is for the moment the living voice of the truth with which he is imbued. Just as the true actor is the man who lives his part, completely identifying himself with the character he assumes, so the forcible speaker is the man whose whole personality is enlisted in his subject. This is the true ὑπόκρισις, which is not the assumption of a part, but the identification of self with it. The man makes it his own, as we say. His own personality is one with his subject. The words are there, but the man is there too. We hear him; and his very heart-beats sound in his voice. Hypocrisy assumes the appearance of things which it does not feel; this is the bad sense: Demos-

thenes used the word in the good sense. He meant that power of really feeling, living, and acting in the thoughts and words spoken, which I call the power of self-identification with one's work. This is to be found in all genius. The artist identifies himself with Nature, and so becomes fit to interpret her. The poet does the same. The skilful and successful lawyer identifies himself with his client. The capacity to do this is a kind of instinct, which is almost genius. But the lower order of minds, whether of artist or of poet, do not possess it; they do their work with conscientious endeavour, and are honest imitators of what they see. The man of true genius seizes the object, sees with its eyes, feels with its emotions; he is sincerely transported into the realm which he describes; there is no sense of unreality

in his endeavours to delineate. He does not copy what he sees: he describes what he knows.

From a sacred point of view, something of this sort is needful for the preacher. It is not a question of genius here: it is a matter of sincerity. The things of which he speaks must not be ideas merely; they must be convictions.

> "If from the soul the language does not come
> By its own impulse, to impel the hearts
> Of hearers with communicated power,
> In vain you strive, in vain you study earnestly."

Unless we speak what we know and testify what we have seen, we shall seek in vain to move the hearts of men.

In the *Guesses at Truth* the brothers Hare said that oratory might be "symbolised by a warrior's eye flashing from under a philosopher's brow.—But why a warrior's eye rather than a poet's?

Because in oratory the will must predominate." This is only saying the same thing in another form. The whole personality of which the will is the final exponent must be enlisted in the sermon. The preacher has a message. He must explain; he must instruct; but he must do more than this. He is not a teacher merely. He is sent to persuade man, and the whole weight of his personal character and will must be thrown into his utterances. If he teach, he may be a man of light; but it is only as he persuades men that he fulfils the other requirement of his calling and becomes a man of leading.

In so far as we have a truth to tell, we have light for men. In so far as we are persuaded of the truth, we can be leaders of men. Truth is of importance, but the personality of him who speaks it is of scarcely less importance. It would be

untrue to say that the personality of the speaker is of more importance than the truth which he speaks; but it is certainly true that the personality is of great importance to the transmission and reception of the truth. It makes a difference whether the light which is enclosed in an earthly vessel shines through a clear or a dull medium. Certainly the Apostle was earnest in his counsel—"Take heed unto *thyself* and to the teaching."

If then our personality counts for so much in our work, it becomes our duty to regard this as a sacred gift and to do our best to make it an efficient force. There are two conditions requisite for this. The first is, "Be yourself." There is a self-confidence which is evil, but there is a self-confidence which is good. It is good when it is the expression of a desire just to be ourselves, and to be none other

than ourselves. This is not evil, for it is compliance with a simple and divine order. Everything expresses itself according to its own order. It is the tendency of every organism to build itself up according to its type. The ambition or effort to be other than self ends in disaster and confusion. The primrose should be content to be a primrose, and not try to rival the rose. The willow with its supple branches has its place in nature as well as the firm unyielding oak. It is a safe rule never to violate nature. Be yourself; and never let admiration for another's gifts betray you into the folly of copying that which is another's. The men who have succeeded have invariably recognised this principle. "I shall not preach like them," said Massillon after hearing the great preachers of his day. He had his own natural bent. David will not wear Saul's armour. It

is usually only an ass that ventures to put on the lion's skin; but it is perhaps more pitiable when the lion stoops to wear the skin of an ass. And there is risk of this when the weak spirit of imitation is given free rein. No; your own individuality is a sacred thing, and you can never rise so high as you can by being, in this sense, true to nature.

> "Mon verre n'est pas grand, mais je bois dans mon verre,"

sang Alfred de Musset. The goblet you carry to the world may not be fit to bear the copious supply for the thirst of many, but you may carry some invigorating refreshment to a few. At any rate, you will avoid that miserable feeling of unreality which is the heritage of those who do but imitate.

There is a snare against which you will do well to be on your guard, namely impatience.

Impatience leads men to imitation. They see a successful man. It is, or it seems to be, an easier and quicker path to copy his methods than to discover their own. It is perhaps a more rapid way at first, but it is not the best way in the end. It is like the proverbial short cut which takes you far from your destination. It is like a series in arithmetical progression; while the earnest determination to be oneself and to improve oneself is like a series in geometrical progression. At first the arithmetical series may appear better, but in the end the series which multiplies in upon itself yields the best results. The longest way round may be the shortest way home. Be sure of this,—impatience will tempt you to imitate, faith will teach you to wait. For faith will remind you that the qualities and powers of nature are God's gifts, and that it is in the use of the talents which

God has given that you will best serve Him. But the vain and foolish desire to be other than you are will not only end in the failure which waits on all unreality, but will leave unused and undeveloped the very gifts which the divine wisdom gave you, that with them you might serve your generation.

The second rule is, "Suppress yourself." This is the paradox of power. We must, before all things, be ourselves; and yet we must, above all things, suppress ourselves. In the order of nature's gifts we must be ourselves; we must yield to no temptation, which ambition or indolence sets before us, to be mere copyists of another man's talents. But in the order of moral and spiritual life we must suppress ourselves. We must learn the meaning of that apostolic thought—"I, yet not I." The man must be himself, but yet he must

crucify self. For only thus can the fulness of his very self come forth. Galahad realised this when he cried, "If I lose myself, I find myself." If self-expression be a true instinct, the safe avenue to self-expression lies through self-repression; for self-consciousness is the hindrance of all free expression, whether by pen or pencil or tongue. The powers of our nature do not work freely without careful development; and even when developed, self-consciousness comes as a check upon the free use of our powers. This is the explanation, I think, of a great deal of that ineffective industry which is such a pathetic spectacle. We see people of unquestioned ability and of persevering dispositions, who yet fail to produce any really effective work. Their conscientious determination seems to miss its reward. Their talent only serves to

show how easy it is to miss the mark. "Cousin Dryden," said Milton, "you will never make a poet." Diligence could not supply the place of the one missing element. George Eliot could write a novel, but when she took to verse her right hand lost its cunning. The abandon, the self-forgetfulness, the losing of self in the joy of the creative work, does not belong to such workers. We understand what Sir Joshua Reynolds meant when he said of the painstaking work which exhibited faultless accuracy of treatment, "It wants *that*." "It wants *that*" —the indescribable something, which adds enchantment and charm to picture or verse, is lacking. Such artists have missed the kiss of the fairy at their birth. The glorious self-absorption in the thing that has to be done, is not there: the delight in the work, apart from results, and still more apart

from human applause or gain, is absent. The achievement is attempted in the wrong way. It is sought directly; the end is clear; the means are clear; the worker understands the rules; he toils by measure and with a painful fidelity to well-recognised canons; but he fails. There is no inspiration in it; he is self-conscious all the while. Wholly different is the way of genius which is interpenetrated with the enthusiasm of art. Were none at hand he must draw, if he is a painter. If he is a poet, he sings but as the linnets do. The song is sweet; the colour is sacred; and the form is full of joy. Such a person is not governed by success. The ruling power is the passion to do; the whole self is in it, and lost in it. There is no thought of self; there is a supreme necessity to do that one thing. This is the inevitableness of genius of which the critics have spoken.

The same spirit kindles in the hearts of those who feel that they have a message from God. There is no thought of self. The coal from the altar has touched their lips. The word of the Lord is as fire in their bones. Necessity is laid upon them. Like the Apostle they cry, "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel." The "I" is lost in the message, and the divine prompting is shown in the "not I." It is only when a divine enthusiasm takes possession of the soul that the miserable self-consciousness can be got rid of.

This self-consciousness hinders alike the man of intellectual and the man of emotional type. The man of intellectual type distrusts his emotions; his power of self-criticism makes him averse to any display of feeling. He hates to make a fool of himself. He restrains, curbs, and almost kills natural feeling. His self-

consciousness takes the form of a pride of indifference. He thereby loses the aid which the strong emotions of earnestness might give him. He is not, being proudly reticent, his real self. None the less does the emotional type of man become the victim of self-consciousness. He has no reticence; he yields too readily to his feelings; even when there is no adequate cause he is sentimental; his intellect exercises no guiding judgment. He bubbles into emotionalism on the smallest provocation. He cultivates the emotional manner till it becomes an unreality. His very self-consciousness leads him into an exaggerated manifestation of the emotions which at first were genuine and natural, but which have at length become artificial and insincere. The remedy for both these evils is the same: the presence of a pure, simple love—the love of work, the love of

God, the love of man. The first and great commandment is the panacea for all moral and spiritual maladies, for disingenuousness, for fear, for ostentation, for pride. Love has no self-consciousness. Genuine kindness has no room for pride or timidity, and has no need of gush. Its own reality protects it. It banishes shyness, which is a subtle form of pride. It endows with courage. "Think of the pleasure you can give to others, and you will not think of yourself," said Archbishop Whateley to the girl who was painfully shy when asked to play the piano at an evening party. When Mrs. Bancroft was young, and appearing upon the stage was too shy to raise her voice sufficiently to be heard, her mother overcame her shyness by a similar appeal. "Over yonder," she said, "there is a poor man who has paid his hard-earned shilling to see the play; if

you don't speak so that he can hear, he will go away disappointed." There was profound wisdom in such an appeal. It called up the better feelings to overcome the worse. Think of the people to whom you are speaking. Think of their needs, of the spiritual want which perchance you can supply, of the heart-craving which you can satisfy, of the inward unspoken sorrow which you can console, and a new and better passion than self-consciousness will take possession of you. You will forget your pride, your timidity, in thinking of their wants. You will catch the spirit of your Master; you will hear His voice saying, "I have compassion on the multitudes." A joy and a zest of work will be yours, and the much-hindering self-consciousness will disappear. You will lose the thought of self in the thought for others.

There remains only one thing more to be said. Better perhaps, as leading us to the highest source of power, is it when we lose the thought of self in the remembrance of God. To lose ourselves in our work, and in the earnest wish to be of service to our people—this is good. It is a still higher thing to forget ourselves in God. After all, it is the realisation that He has sent us, which brings with it the sense of that nobler necessity which not only banishes that miserable feeling of self-consciousness, but lifts us to a higher plane of life. The sense that there is something which God would have us do, which He has ordered for us beforehand, raises us above the passing emotions, dreads, and failures of the present. That strong and striking fatalism which marked the mental attitude of great men in the past was but the groping after this truth. The

sense of God behind us, behind our life, behind our work, imparts a charm, a worshipfulness, a joyous security, to all that we do. We can understand the longing of gifted men to realise the guidance of God in their work. We can understand how Haydn never attempted to compose till he had prayed. Upon the instrument of Gounod the head of the Christ was carved, to remind him of Him whose presence and power could sanctify and elevate human work. The preacher should not be behind such men as these. He, of all others, needs to realise the divine power and presence. It is when his own personality is interpenetrated by the presence of One greater and higher than himself that his personality is really capable of expressing itself most fully and most truly among men. It is when he yields himself most absolutely and completely

to the message which God gives him that he is nearest to reaching the people's hearts. Like the Baptist, he must have no name, no self, to put before his audience. "Who art thou?" is the constant question; and still the answer must be, "Not Elias, not Jeremias, not one of the prophets, nor I nor any other name of earth would I be to you. Only would I be the voice which speaks the divine message to men."

In such a man the realisation of the divine call will overpower every other feeling. Egotism can find no place. Our ambition of saying smart things, telling good anecdotes, concocting effective passages, will die out. We shall desire only to carry words that may live in the hearts and lives of men. A young man who was about to be ordained went to bid good-bye to the master of his college. "You are going to be a clergyman," said the

master, "and no doubt you think that the essays you have composed here will be of use to you in preaching. Do not use them—preach living words to living men." Such was the counsel of the late Master of Balliol.

No, gentlemen! no higher ambition can be ours than that our words should be living words; and only when they are the honest expression of our own convictions, spoken under the power of a compulsion greater than our own, will they be living words to living men. Nor need we doubt or despair; heaven's way is always open to men. There is a story of an artist confined in Crete among a rude people. He longed to cross the ocean to some cultivated city where his work would be valued and understood; but no way was open across earth or ocean. He could not, he reflected, pass

to other towns; but one way was open—

"Restat iter cæli, cælo tentabimus ire."

Restat iter cæli. You may be called to preach among people who seem to you dull and unsympathetic. You may be in the lonely moorland parish, where the folk care little for anything beyond the growth of the fields and the changes of the weather. You may be in the crowded town, where the intellectual and moral level is low and discouraging. You may be tempted to think, "These are dull, ignorant people —anything will do for them." When this temptation is yours, recall the divine message and the divine calling, and resolve to put your whole self into your work of preaching. If success, or popularity, or encouraging appreciation be not given to you, remember the heavenly way of earnestness, of honesty, of God's

approval, is still open. If there be few to listen and none to applaud, remember that none the less your whole spirit and soul are God's, and that they must be in this work; for only thus will you become, what I am sure you desire to be, real, efficient, and whole-hearted ministers of Christ.

LECTURE II

THE last lecture dealt with the great and supreme importance of preserving, and working through, our own personality. As life is sacred, so is our selfhood to be esteemed a sacred thing, inasmuch as it is the vehicle through which we can carry God's message to the world. As God has given to every seed its own body, and to every flower its own form, so is there for every human being an order according to which it is natural that he should develop, and it is in his ripening according to this order that he can best discharge his duty and deliver a true message to mankind.

The more clearly we grasp this thought, the more reverently shall we gird ourselves for that vocation in life to which God may see fit to call us. This is true of every life. It is emphatically true of the clergyman's life. The man who is called to so sacred a ministry must be of all others that man which God meant him to be. The gifts, powers, and capacities given to him from his birth it is his duty to cultivate, because in the cultivation of these lies the best possible means of his self-expression; and the better he can express himself to mankind, the more completely will he be able to fulfil his ministry among men.

To fulfil this ministry it is our duty in the highest and noblest sense to make the best of ourselves. We touch here the duty of self-cultivation. In the first place, I ask you to notice the great necessity that exists for it. In the second instance,

the spirit and methods in which we can best attain it.

First, I would speak of the necessity of self-culture and of self-training for the work of preaching. I say for the work of preaching, for though it applies to all aspects of ministerial work, the subject of preaching is that which it is our special duty to keep in mind. Two or three preliminary difficulties may be dealt with. Training and cultivation may be objected to on the ground that preaching ought to be natural and not oratorical. "I dislike," we have sometimes heard it said—"I dislike oratorical preaching." What is natural, we all agree, is certainly best. But we may consider whether we are not likely to be betrayed by the use of a phrase into a misconception of the case; we may be misled by the ambiguity of a word.

This argument against what is called

oratorical preaching seems to me to involve either a quibble or an untruth. It may involve a quibble. If the word oratorical is used in a bad sense, and is the equivalent of the artificial and unreal speech which strains after effect, then by all means let us banish oratorical preaching. But why should we condemn the word oratorical to bear this sense? Many words are capable of a good as well as of a bad sense. Even in the presence of those learned teachers who are here, I may say that it is possible to speak of a Professor as if we meant a mere Professor and nothing more. But why should we speak as though only a bad meaning attached to the word? It is an unfair method of argument to commence by forcing an ill meaning on a word, and then conducting the argument in such a fashion that the good meaning of the word is forgotten. But, gentlemen, you will

not be imposed upon by such a quibble in the case of this word oratorical. Oratorical does not necessarily mean artificial and ostentatious. But the objection that natural preaching is to be preferred to oratorical, if not a quibble, suggests what is untrue. It suggests that all oratory is unnatural—and by what right do you tell me that what is oratorical is not natural? On the contrary, few things are more natural to a man than oratory. Watch a child in a passion and see how oratorical are its utterances. Observe the old woman in the market-place when she is eager to vend her wares, and tell me if she is not most proficient in the art of oratory. I call to mind how once in the market-place at Bangor I was fascinated by the eloquence of an old woman. I understood not a single word of her speech, for she spoke Welsh, but her eloquence was obvious. If you listen

to the Cheap-Jack who wishes to persuade you to a bargain, you will find him eloquent and oratorical, for he is in earnest. There is often fire in his words, for he speaks with a purpose. If you speak with a purpose, you too will find your heart glow; you will become oratorical when life enters into your words. I therefore challenge the theory that to be oratorical is necessarily to be unreal, for oratory is natural to men.

But this leads us to another difficulty. It may be said, "If oratory is natural, then training is needless." But this again is mere trifling. We can safely traverse the spirit of such a statement. It is true that no man will become a great preacher or a great speaker by training, but it is also true that no man will become a great or effective speaker without training. No man will become great in any line of life

merely by training. There are callings, it may be, which need no special aptitude ; ordinary intelligence and industry conjoined with training will fit a man for them. But there are vocations for which some special aptitude or gift is necessary, and without the possession of some such quality success is impossible. Where this is wanting no amount of training will supply its place. No power of evolution will develop the beautiful mechanism of the hand out of the head of a broomstick. There must be original capacity for development in a certain direction, or there will be no fitting development. You cannot by mere training make a man a great poet, or even a minor poet, unless he be a poet born. It is the same with the true artist ; he is not made by mere training. Training will not give the poet's eye for beauty, or the artist's eye for colour. Attempt

it, and your attempt will result in calamitous failure. Training cannot supply the place of native capacity.

Does it follow, then, that training is of no service? Shall we argue that because a man cannot be made great by training, therefore training is superfluous? or that because natural gifts are essential to success, therefore their cultivation is needless?—no reasonable man will argue thus. Reflection will show us that many things are natural to us, but the power to do them does not come to us by nature. It is natural to us to walk, but we were all taught to walk. It is natural to us to talk, but were not the first syllables of speech put into our lips? It is natural to man to swim, but who ever heard of a man being able to swim without having learned? It is a mistake to suppose that because a thing is natural there is no need

of trained skill in the doing of it. Education develops our capacities, and training bestows skill upon us. In the full possession of our powers, and of skill in the use of them, we become free men. All early life resembles a struggle for freedom. Young life is like the life of the man who is dragged out of the water half drowned; he fights to recover his breath, because he recovers freedom and power of existence in recovering his breath. The same is the case with the child born yesterday: it struggles to enter into the possession of its life. Every step of growth is a step towards that full possession of life which is freedom. When the child is taught gymnastics or dancing, what is the real value of such teaching? Do you believe that the wise parents think first or mainly of the triumphs of the field or the ball-room? No; they are alive to a

nobler gain than such trifles. They see that the advantage of such a training lies in the mastery which the child acquires over its own frame, in the capacity to use its powers. This is the true value of the drill-ground. Children's clumsy little hands and awkward limbs need discipline. Their fingers are all thumbs, we say; they need to be exercised till they answer readily to the bidding of the will; the nerve-centres are not yet capable of prompt response and firm guidance. Training is directed toward bringing the physical powers under the control and direction of the will. Grace of movement is naturalness of movement; this, in the early stages, is lacking, because the will-power, nerve-centres, and muscle are not yet co-ordinated. The child is trained that it may gain the mastery over, and the use of, its own powers. It is the same with

mental discipline. When Euclid was put before you for the first time in your life, it was not simply that you might learn that the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal, or that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles. There was a purpose greater than mere knowledge in your study. Gymnastics give mastery over the physical frame, so the discipline of Euclid makes you master of your powers of reason. It is the possession of mental power, not of mere knowledge, that is aimed at, for only when a man is master of his powers of frame and brain is he truly a free man; not till then has he power to live his life fully. We hear people talk about freedom of thought as though freedom of thought meant the right to accept any novelty of opinion or mad freak of ignorance. Freedom of

thought is only possible where there is freedom of mind, and the mind is only free when it can work freely and smoothly as a well-made machine, working according to its own order. Thus the natural use of the mind is given to us through training.

As then it is natural to use our limbs, but we need training to use them gracefully, *i.e.* naturally; as it is natural to use our minds, but it is needful to train them for their natural use; so also it is natural to speak, but there is need of some training that speech may be effective.

But there is another objection which may be noticed. It is argued that training may be necessary, but that it has a tendency to denaturalise the man in the process; the trained speaker, it is said, becomes the artificial speaker. There is of course always a risk of this, but we must

not conclude that training necessarily denaturalises, merely because we have met with some persons who, after elaborate training, have become artificial in manner. Artificiality is rather an evidence of inadequate training than a proof of the viciousness of all training. There is no necessity that training should lead to artificiality. Where this result occurs it is more likely that the training has been bad, or else (you will forgive the suggestion) there has been something wrong in the person who has been trained. It may be possible that the defects complained of may be the defects due to character, or to neglect of opportunities. In this the parable of the sower may teach us. Our Lord told us that some seed fell by the wayside; it was profitless sowing, for no fruit grew up. Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang

up with it and choked it; other fell upon rocky soil, which lacked depth of earth and therefore withered under the heat of the sun. It is a lesson for all life. The value of teaching depends upon the spirit with which it is met. With some, teaching leads to no result whatever. In the case of others, there is a quick and shallow result; while with others, conceit, or vanity, or idle imitativeness spring up with the seed, and the result is scarcely profitable because mixed with unreality. Personal eagerness for success ruins the effect of education. Thus thorns choke the developing powers, and the best results of study are thwarted and weakened. Honest and careful study, on the other hand, when conducted on right lines, will enlarge our views, increase our natural capacity, and add to our strength of will.

There is, however, another danger against

which the student needs to watch. He may be betrayed by the worship of form, instead of remembering that form is only the vehicle of thought. There are artists who are worshippers of form. Everything must be surrendered rather than external beauty. To such the raiment is more than the body. Truth and fidelity to the idea are less than the form. This worship of form results in a certain development of taste, a fastidiousness of taste, but it leads to loss of power. The truth, the idea, must find its own form, rather than lose its veracity by being forced into some special mould. Nature expresses herself in an infinite variety of forms, and all of them have a beauty of their own, but the form is a true expression in each case. It is not assumed because it is beautiful. It is beautiful because it is a natural and true expression. Here again we meet the

inevitableness of which I spoke in my last lecture; wherever there is this inevitableness there must be beauty. It is so true, and so truly expressed, that we feel it could not be otherwise. We may worship too much what is called the artistic side of things; but in doing so, we may cease to be artists. Faultlessness of form is not the same as splendour in art. On the contrary, the over-straining after it produces a certain weakness. You remember how Browning put this before us in his poem. The faultless painter, Andrea del Sarto, criticises the work of his great contemporary. His eye, keen for form, detects the ill-drawing of the forearm in one of the figures. With one touch he could set it right, but he abstains—

"Indeed the arm is wrong,
I hardly dare . . . yet, only you to see,
Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line should go!
Ay, but the soul! he's Rafael! rub it out."

We see the whole position. In his soul Andrea worships the natural strength of the greater artist, but he himself has lost his original strength ; he has denaturalised himself through a weak and fastidious devotion to mere form. Now the object of training is not to suppress nature, but to enable nature to affirm itself in fitting form. True art is reached when nature can express itself nobly and well. The history of English poetry illustrates this principle. The soul of song was well-nigh lost by the tyranny of form. It is the restoration of the spirit of nature when we pass from the smooth versification of Pope and his imitators to the free heart-utterances of Cowper and Wordsworth. In all work there is the danger which springs from the worship of the material rather than of the thought which the artist compels the material to express. He is the truest artist who compels the material to speak

his thought to the world. To surrender your thought to the vehicle of form is to confess yourself weaker than your instrument. "I have never," said Dante, "used a word for rhyme's sake." With him thought was first, and words must do the bidding of thought: thought must not be surrendered for the sake of a beautiful word. Better poorer material in which thought lives than the richest which fails to express it. Quintilian long since spoke the same truth. Marble is a precious stone, but a common stone wrought into beauty by the hand of Phidias is more precious than marble. The mind of genius lifts the stone above its natural value. Cultivation and training are designed to give freedom to the artist's hand of genius. By their means he is able to express his soul to the world: the material he uses becomes obedient to his

mind and will. This is his creative power, for thus his spirit embodies itself in form. In this way the preacher should by cultivation become master of his material, and so capable of giving forth freely and simply his thought and message to men.

What spirit and method may we best use in this self-cultivation? I am not about to lay down any rules of oratory — far from it. Gentlemen, there are hand-books on elocution and manuals for orators to which some public men fly, as the indolent-brained resort to ready-reckoners. There may be some apology, grounded on practical utility, made for the use of the ready-reckoner; but there is no such apology for the reliance upon manuals which pretend to abridge the labour of the preacher. Short cuts to success are usually quick roads to disaster.

By-path Meadow led to the Castle of Despair.

I do not believe that we can ever evade the wholesome law of hard work, which tests earnestness and invigorates power. The wish to reach the goal without running over the course is the sign of a vain and foolish mind. I would not, therefore, even if I could, give you a single rule which would enable you to evade the labour and industry which are indispensable to all who desire to do lasting good. I speak to you as men who are, I hope, persuaded that only honest hard work and patient study can lead to true success. Let us dismiss from our minds at once the delusive idea that we can ever do worthy work by unworthy means, that we can reap without sowing, or have any hope of winning the race by evading the fair rules of the course. I would only speak of the true

forms of training. This you will understand. All that I can do is to put you on your guard against some mistaken ideas of preparation for work. Let me illustrate two opposite methods. There are two men commencing their studies in the same sculptor's studio. One thinks he will find out the trick of the master who teaches him. He carefully watches every movement of the skilful hand. He sees with what trained dexterity the artist employs, as living instruments, his fingers. It is a wondrous trick which the sculptor possesses. He is eager to catch it. He thinks he sees what it is—yes, he has, so he believes, nearly caught it; but he never does. The other man puts his whole soul alongside the artist's soul. He endeavours to read his larger purpose. He fain would catch, not the trick, but the spirit of the master. With unskilful fingers and clumsy hands he strives to

mould the clay. His work in it is crude, unfinished, yes, unsightly, but he has put himself into it: it is living work with the spirit of the man in it. This is the difference between desire to do real work and the desire of mere effect. Idle and disingenuous souls are content with the clever trickery which simulates art. Honest men are discontented with anything short of real bona-fide work.

I am not, you will understand, at the present, speaking of the preparation of the sermon—later, I hope to speak more specifically of that. I am now speaking of the general training of self and of the cultivation of those qualities which are indispensable to all effective work. We must prepare our sermons, but before we do this it is needful that we prepare ourselves to be teachers of others. In the judgment of Cicero oratory included the study of philosophy,

of laws, of the structure and nature of man's frame, of the arts of reasoning, of history and poetry. Indeed, as Fénelon remarked, he seems to think that an orator should know everything. I am ready to admit that time and opportunity are often against the possibility of so elaborate a training. But the spirit of Cicero's counsel is just and fit. Cicero meant that the man who would speak effectually to his fellowmen must be a man whose range of thought and study was large. Everything belonging to the provinces of human life and thought, of human history and human nature, should enlist his interest, and provide food for his thought. His range must be larger than his profession. In the same spirit Gounod said to his pupils, "Be wider than your calling." And consistently with this advice he contended for the maintenance of the Grand Prix de

Rome. When the opponents argued that the students who were sent to Rome did not get musical training in Rome, Gounod pleaded in reply that the Prize was good and useful inasmuch as men gained by the associations of the past; they caught inspiring thoughts and feelings from the masterpieces of great artists. These things were helps, though not directly allied with musical training; for art was more than technical skill in one branch; it was a spirit belonging to all. Gounod's practice corresponded with his theory. He surrounded himself with helps and influences from other avenues of life than his own. His library embraced books on many and varied subjects. Medallions bearing the names of great men decorated his staircase. Raphael, Mozart, Beethoven, Michael Angelo, Bach, Rubens, Rembrandt, Dante, Homer, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Corneille, and Molière, were there. He

knew that to be efficient in your calling you must be wider than your calling. Bulwer Lytton in *My Novel* expressed the same thought. He says of the young poet: "He read what poets must read if they desire to be great—strict reasonings on the relations between motive and conduct, thought and action; the grave and solemn truths of the past world; antiquities, history, philosophy."

Those who were privileged to enter Tennyson's study will remember that walls and bookshelves preached the same lesson —Be wider than your calling. The poets were there, but philosophy, theology, history, found place beside the masters of song, and the poet lived among them all and found strength in their companionship. So, I repeat it again, if you wish to preserve strength and freshness, if you wish to be able to make your

message clear, be wider than your calling.

But here I can imagine a feeling of hesitation arising. Ought we not to limit our studies to our calling? Does not the Ordination Service bind us to limit our studies to matters of faith? Are we not bound to draw all our studies this way? It is perfectly true that as we are guardians of spiritual things, so to these should be dedicated our thoughts and lives. But the drawing of our studies this way implies not limitation of study so much as consecration of it. The consecrated life is the life which is lived in the realisation of the sacred purpose of life. All studies may be turned to consecrated uses by one who shall so resolve. Just as the poet and musician make all their studies subservient to the one supreme purpose of life, so the clergyman should draw all studies into

sacred uses. He is not a consecrated man merely because he confines his reading to certain books. He is a consecrated man whose whole heart and mind are alive to the needs of men and to the message of God for men—whose reading ranges everywhere, that he may know more of human need and of divine strength. No doubt, practically, we must put limits on our studies — time and mental aptitude and personal limitations will compel this — but the wise and earnest man, who can keep the sense of his consecration always before his mind, will neglect no study which tends to make him stronger and more efficient in his influence and ministry.

If then our consecration is to be real, it should be the consecration of all our powers; none of those powers and faculties which God has given us should be suffered to wither or decline. We ought not to

be one-sided men. The cultivation of all our intellectual endowments should be our aim. Reason, knowledge, imagination, affection, should be trained into strength and use.

1. You must cultivate your powers of reason. It is important that you should remember that sound reasoning is indispensable in your calling. We can never be too careful in this matter. We are so easily carried away by impulse, bias, prejudice. We need, in self-protection against these traitors to thought, to exercise constantly, so that we may gain the power of using habitually, our reasoning faculty. We need in our studies, in our pulpit preparation, in our meditation, the help of what Bacon called the dry light of reason. Then thought is dispassionate; personal feeling and diverting emotions are kept far away; reason is doing its work. If

we fail in cultivating this habit we shall sooner or later be the victims of our whims, passions, transient emotions, or fixed prejudices. In order that you may cultivate your powers of reason, it is well to have always on hand some book that compels you to think. A schoolmaster of mine used to say that if he were shut up in prison with the choice of only four books, he would choose the Bible, Euclid, Plato, and Shakespeare. Now, gentlemen, you are not, I hope, literalists: I hope you never will be. A literalist is one who understands not the spirit of a matter; he discerns not an allegory; he is puzzled by a fable; he argues about a joke, and poetry is far out of his sight. I hope that you are not such, and that you will not insist on interpreting this little list of books too literally. The value of the suggestion lies in the fact that these books

touch four great powers of man. In Euclid you must exercise the dry light of reason. In the study of the other books, other powers are brought into exercise. Euclid stands, therefore, for any book which compels calm, sustained, and concentrated thought. There is no philosophical prejudice or theological bias about Euclid. He makes you keep to the point: he allows no room for likes and dislikes. Best of all, he will not let you off. If your wit wanders, he compels you to begin again. Books which do this for the mind are wholesome; and I would counsel you never to be without such a book for study. It is no matter, in one sense, what book it is, so long as it is a book which reminds you that logic is a good thing, and that the laws of thought count for something in human life. Such studies brace up the mind. For my own

part, I think that if they did nothing else in this direction, clergymen would not be the worse for tackling occasionally a good stiff mathematical problem, or trying their hand at some recent examination paper in logic or science.

2. Study what will enlarge your range of knowledge—keep up what I may describe as your fund of information. Read what will widen your acquaintance with philosophy, history, scientific discovery. The exercise of reason is good. The acquisition of knowledge opens up to us fields over which thought and reason can range—material is stored up which will be of service in your various duties. The lecture, the address, the young men's class, will be the gainers; you will have a mind ready with some subject, or furnished with facts, incidents, and examples.

3. Do not leave the imagination unfed.

Arguments, as Fuller said, are the pillars of a discourse; illustrations are the windows which let in the light. Imagination, no less than reason, is God's gift. It is the power by which dulness or baldness is avoided. Now, imagination is lacking in some men; it is exuberant in others. If a man has no gift of imagination, he is just the man to cultivate it. If he says that he has not a particle of imagination, and that therefore there is nothing to cultivate, I venture to disbelieve him. He has only to recall his infant days, his delight in giant story or fairy tale, or his own day-dreaming, and he will find that there is some germ of imagination in him. But should he fail, and find no interest in poetry, or parable, or romance, or allegory, or in the arts that shed a beauty upon life, he had better abandon all thought of standing up to speak in pulpit

or on platform. But if imagination be strong in a man, then again he is just the man to cultivate it, by the study of grave and noble examples; for these will teach how imagination is a power only in the hands of men who possess also a large reasonableness. Cultivation in this case will chasten and purify the native power and increase its effectiveness and use. For the preacher this restrained imagination is useful. Many a sermon would have gained in brightness and interest if only the preacher had put in some windows. In healthy schools the window space should be equal to the floor space. In Germany, since more light has been allowed in the schools, short sight has declined. Cultivated imagination puts window space into a sermon, and the perceptive power of the people is improved.

But cultivate imagination in a wise

fashion. In some clergymen's studies I have noticed a certain book. It is very thick; it is in truth a bulky volume. I know not how many pages there may be, but they must run to a thousand or more. The title is *Illustrative Anecdotes*, *Pulpit Aids*, or *Fragments of Fancy*. These are crutches of the imagination. They may suit the lame, but they do not strengthen those who can walk. A man's imagination should be somewhere else than on his book-shelves. What I plead for is the study which will keep the imagination fresh, ready, and vigorous. It should be no reproach to the Christian minister that he desires to teach through the imagination. Our Lord used imagination in teaching; He spoke by parables, and in speaking by parable He appealed to the responsive imaginations of men. He strove to make nature and home-life preach to

men. He would have the grass and the lily tell their story. He sought to make men imagine, through some earthly story, the depth, the fulness, and the unweariedness of the divine love. He knew that thus there was a way to human hearts. He knew that the power to tell a simple tale might be greater than the power to conduct an argument. He used similitudes. He consecrated for us the use of imagination. We need not fear to use it. When you would make a thing clear to a child, you take up the little one on your knee and you tell him a story, calling fancy to your aid to make it plain. And among your people there will be plenty of those children of a larger growth whom you may reach best through the imagination which stirs the heart. Use reason, by all means; but, remember, not reason alone has won victories in the past over

the spirits of men. Reason is strong, but not so strong that she can afford to disdain imagination as her comrade. Reason can but walk. Imagination gives her wings. With these she may reach those high places and rocky spots where the spirits of men take refuge from pursuit of disagreeable truths.

One more faculty needs to be cultivated —the faculty of devotion. I have counselled the study of a reason-bracing book, like Euclid, for the sake of the intellect; Shakespeare might well be your companion for the sake of the imagination; but, in these cases, your selection of suitable books must be left to yourselves. When, however, I come to the necessity of maintaining the power of spiritual affection and sincere devotion, I speak of the Bible, not merely as a type, but as the one book which should be your supreme guide and constant companion. I need not remind

you of the unique homage of reverent faith which our own Church pays to the Bible. You have only to turn to the Ordination Service to find how strong and worshipful is this faith. You cannot compass the doing of the weighty work of your ministry "but with doctrine and exhortation taken out of the Holy Scriptures, and with a life agreeable to the same"; and therefore you are to "consider how studious you ought to be in reading and learning the Scriptures, and in framing the manners both of yourselves and of them that specially pertain unto you, according to the rule of the same Scriptures." The promise which the candidate makes is that he will out of the Scriptures instruct the people committed to his charge. At this solemn hour of life the Bible is spoken of as the source of help and the basis of instruction. For the clergyman, therefore,

there ought to be and there can be no choice in this matter. He is pledged to be a diligent student of the Bible. And this not merely for the sake of his sermons, but for the sake of himself. There are many manuals of devotion, little volumes designed to stimulate our spiritual affections or raise our flagging faith. They are well meant, and there may be times in which they may be read with profit, but they are of doubtful value at the best; and if they are used as substitutes for Bible study, they are worse than useless: they are leading the clergyman to the betrayal of his spoken promise. They are but sorry substitutes, moreover,—all that is best in them is drawn from the Bible; and there is often in them a strain of unreality. I am persuaded that the truest, healthiest, and most robust devotional life is that which is built up of patient, regular,

prayerful Bible study. I need not remind you that in our own time the incentives to this study are great indeed. Questions of criticism, of history and archæology, have been discussed. On all sides there are reasons for special thought; from all sides light is streaming upon us if we will only have the eyes to see. And if these very questions should fill us with dismay at the task before us, and make the study of the Bible seem more laborious than before, we may yet remember that none of these questions practically touch the spiritual teaching of the Bible, or have had power to dethrone the Bible from its place as the greatest, purest, deepest, and truest book of devotion in the world.

The scheme which I have sketched out embraces the cultivation of all your powers of reason, knowledge, imagination, and devotion. If you are to be true teachers and

true guides of your people, you will neglect none of these. All the past teaches us that those have best taught the world who have best taught themselves. The apparent ease with which a skilful man does his work tends, however, to deceive us. It seems so easy that we imagine it can easily be done. But this is a deception which reflection will dissipate. The steamship glides past us as we watch it from the shore. She glides over the waters like a thing of life. Her movement appears to us easy and noiseless; but when we take our place on board we know what effort, what expenditure of thought, labour, and fuel has secured this swift and graceful movement. To the idler on the shore the thing is easy. To the men on board it means real and ceaseless work. Can we expect that we can do any profitable work without labour? If we desire to reach skill and power, we

must be prepared to pay the price, and that price is zealous, sedulous, constant self-cultivation. Every preacher will tell you the same. Their sermons, which seem as we listen to them to be so natural and inevitable, are the outcome of much reading and thought. Whether the individual sermon has cost more or less, the price has been paid in general labour and constant study beforehand. At the gate of life stand two angels. One promises you success in life without exertion, the other offers you the prize if you work for it. You can take your choice. You may win a cheap, rapid, and easy success by lax methods and smart-mindedness; but if you desire the true prize, you will only find it in the way of labour. But even here I do not mean the prize of success or the applause which follows a great preacher. I put before you no such aim.

There is a better : it is the simple desire to be a sincere and effective minister of Christ. With such an aim you will think no toil too great, no demand on your time too burdensome, if only you can do true work and lay it as an offering at the feet of Him who laboured and toiled and bled for you.

With such a spirit you will not offer what costs you nothing ; but you will, while the vigour of life is still yours, and before the day comes when age makes work difficult and new habits impossible, establish good habits of self-cultivation. You will continue these through life. You will never give up thinking, reading, and studying. The more you reverence your life, your calling, and Him who orders your life and gives you your calling, the more earnestly will you cultivate every capacity and every gift that can be drawn into the service of Christ your Lord.

LECTURE III

The subject of my lecture is the Sermon.

The first qualification for writing a sermon is, that you should have something to say. No man can carve a statue until he has the stone ready; no man can mould a figure till he has the clay; and no man should imagine that he can write his sermon till he has something to say. You will not wonder that I reiterate this, because many a man sits down in his study on a Saturday to write his Sunday's sermon and finds himself the victim of blank despair, and racks his brain with anxiety because he is conscious that he has nothing

to say. Now an authority tells us that whenever a preacher finds he has nothing to say, he may be sure that the fault lies in himself. We must certainly agree with him; for if there is anything great and glorious in Christianity, it is extraordinary that any man charged to preach it should find himself with nothing to say.

I might enlarge on the sadness of this discovery. It is enough to say that such a discovery should be an incentive to self-questioning: we must take ourselves to task, and ask ourselves why it is so. Has our early fervour abated? Has our perception of divine things grown dim? Have we been neglectful of study? Have we laid aside the culture of spiritual life which is indispensable to the vigour and force of our religious conceptions? Questions such as these we may well ask, when our spirits find no message of God for our

people. But consciousness of mental barrenness is not always a symptom of spiritual decline. Physical and nervous conditions play some part in these experiences. In certain states of health, the very fact that you have to say something operates as a kind of paralysis on thought. The recurrence of this necessity, week after week, in the midst of many calls on time, mind, and sympathy, may occasion intellectual numbness, and make creative work difficult. This condition is not wholly caused by decline in the spiritual life.

Do not be dismayed or daunted because you experience such a thing as that. Take yourself to task, by all means. Be vigilant against yourself; but do not conclude that you are in a hopeless condition—many a man of God has met with similar experiences.

Yes, your very zeal may lead you

into this land of bitter experience. Some have entered upon the work of ministry full of enthusiasm. Have they not the gospel to preach? Can they ever weary of this glorious message? But they have wearied, for they have found that the work of a stated ministry involves more responsibility and close study than the work of casual and peripatetic evangelism. They have discovered that the wonderful evangelistic fervour which carried them through occasional or special mission efforts, is not always stable enough to make them useful and efficient teachers of Christ in a parish. Thus our very ardour may mislead us, and cause us to feel an incapacity or unfitness for regular ministry. For parochial zeal we need much "staying" power.

For this purpose a man must have material at command. It is better to

realise this necessity, even though it should lead you to discover how small your stock of material is, than that you should indulge in indolent self-complacency, and should attempt to spin something out of nothing. It is hardly a satisfactory criticism of a preacher which declares he had nothing to say, and he said it. We have all heard sermons which have made us feel sad, because they were so evidently the attempt to say something which had not been settled beforehand. Such efforts can hardly be successful. There is a dull uninteresting game which in certain households we are asked to play. The game is called Fish-ponds. The process is something of this sort. You attempt by means of something which is not a fishing-rod to pick up something which is not a fish. Now I have never seen that game played without being irresistibly reminded of the preacher who has

not anything to say. As in the game you drop down that which is not a fishing-rod to pick up what is not a fish, so the preacher preaches a discourse which is not a sermon, but in which the sermon seems always about to begin. There is a vain attempt to pick up something which, when he has got it, is not worth anything. I would rather that blank despair settled upon your spirits and miserable anxiety should keep you from sleeping all the nights of the week, than that you should attempt to do such a thing as that. You must have something to say; and you must make up your mind how to say it. In other words, you must first get your material, and then put it into form.

First, get your material. You will not find in handbooks on oratory many suggestions respecting the method by which to accumulate material. But

there is one simple method. If I may borrow the example, consecrated by usage for many generations, I would bid you remember the three Rs, which lie at the root of all true knowledge, the same, with one exception, as those with which we are familiar. The three Rs I would suggest are, Reflection, Reading, and (the precedent warrants the inaccuracy) Writing.

First, Reflection. You remember the appeal of Demosthenes, which we may repeat and need to repeat often : " For God's sake, gentlemen, I beseech you to think." Richter gave us a parallel but more complete precept, because he insisted on the order of these three needful processes. He says : " Never read till you have thought yourself hungry ; never write till you have read yourself full." There are but few people willing to keep the first half of this precept, though many may be willing to keep the second. They are

willing to rush to their books in order to be ready to write; but they are not willing to deal with the preliminary drudgery of patient thought upon their subject. Yet it is indispensable that before we write we should think. The precept does not mean that we must do all our thinking before we read — that is impossible; but it does mean that reading without previous thought is apt to be profitless. To use a simple illustration, it is like sitting down to a meal before we have got an appetite. Thought is as important to the mind as exercise to the body. Both give appetite; the hunger comes from exertion. We hunger to know, because we have thought. We are then guided by a healthy wish for information; our reading becomes intelligent; we know what we want. Time is saved, and we are the better able to digest what we have studied.

There is also a moral argument on behalf of this precept, to reflect before we read. It is easy to go to our books, and it is true that from them we may gather material, but it is material very difficult to digest. The chances are that we shall utilise such material without much reflection. We shall not assimilate it, and make it our own. But to have thought beforehand is to make our whole nature ready for work; it is to promote a kind of mental integrity with regard to the material employed. We shall have put our own mind and our own endeavour into our work. There is more satisfaction because there is more honesty in such work—we are thinking and working out our subject, we are not merely looking for something to say.

Therefore, for the sake of mind and of moral vigour, do not get into the habit of

ransacking on Saturday all the books which are likely to give you suggestions for the Sunday sermon. Be wise and thoughtful beforehand. Have your subjects well in hand. Think them out. Find out where you need information. Note what lines of thought are involved. Observe your own deficiencies in such subjects or directions of thought. Thus, by reflection, make ready for study.

Secondly, Reading. In my last lecture I spoke of reading as it affected the general course of a clergyman's life; now I am to speak of it in relation to the sermon itself. For besides general reading you will need some special study for your sermons. You will need to study whatever will serve to elucidate and illustrate the subject. But even here, do not be content with merely reading for that special subject. Take care to read more than you require.

Dr. Fitch tells us in his book on *Education* that "no person can adequately teach any subject unless he knows more than the points he is prepared to put forward." I remember a description once given me of a clergyman. It was said of his sermons that he always worked himself up to his subject. But this is not the best plan. It is better that a man should go down to his subject. To seem to work up to it is to give the impression of strain and effort. To descend upon your subject is to act with the confidence of mastery. In the one case a man seems to be putting things into his sermon in order to bring it up to average length; in the other case, the preacher has selected from his treasury of study that which will best make clear his subject. The preacher is like a general who takes up a position with the intention of fighting a battle; but as the wise

general is one who makes himself well acquainted, not with his camp-surroundings only, but with the whole geography of the neighbourhood, so is the wise preacher one who knows not only his subject, but the bearing of it on kindred questions and interests. He should know not only the ideas he wishes to put before his people, but also the facts which justify his doing so, and their general significance in relation to other realms of thought. Such a man has climbed above his subject, and can descend upon it with a feeling of confidence and power. Survey your subject from the heights of wide and careful study. Read more than is required for the immediate occasion. This gives the sense of security, which only conscientious work can provide. It will save you from the sense of shame which an ill-prepared or hastily-worked sermon may bring. There may be among

your hearers those who have studied much. The knowledge of their presence, when you are conscious of haste and slovenliness, will fill you with misgiving. Your faith in your message will suffer as you speak, for you will be conscious how easily some auditor can, with his powers of criticism and knowledge, show how threadbare are your little rags of thought. Daniel Wilson, when preaching in Bedford Chapel, was asked, "Are you not afraid when you see so many learned and distinguished people in your congregation?" He said, "No, I am not; though I know that many are my superiors in general knowledge and in Bible scholarship, yet I am sure that none of them has studied the particular subject of my sermon more diligently than I have." This is one secret of confidence—study. Leave no stone unturned beneath which fact or knowledge may lurk. Reflect and

read that you may be fully persuaded of the meaning and truth of what you say.

It is in meditation and study that zeal will awaken. What we gather heedlessly, and treat without reverence, will never awaken our interest or stir our ardour. It was while the Psalmist was "musing that the fire kindled." The fire of ambition to do worthy work kindles as we think and read of matters which touch human life. But a purer fire than that of the purest human ambition may kindle as we meditate, study, and pray. God's own fire from heaven will descend upon our hearts. It was when the prophet had built his altar, prepared the wood, and laid his sacrifice in order, that the fire from heaven descended in answer to his prayer. God helps those who help themselves. To those who use all diligence and neglect no means of success, He gives

His aid. His inspiration descends not upon the careless and the idle; but to those who wait on Him and work He comes in power, and gives them that kindling spirit which consumes foolish egotism and base timidity, and glows within them with the pure love of doing good.

Thirdly, Writing. I am not now referring to written sermons in contrast to what are called extemporaneous sermons. I am speaking of writing as a part of preparation, whether you speak or read your sermon. In either case use your pen. It is a foolish and dull mistake to suppose that the extemporaneous preacher forgoes the use of his pen. The idea is next to a myth. I think that though you were to give me examples of such a practice, you would only give me examples of inefficient preaching. No man can afford to

do without his pen. It is no doubt true that a man after thirty or forty years' experience of preaching may use his pen comparatively little in his preparation; but his power to forgo the use of the pen is due to the accumulated force of those thirty or forty years of hard pen work. It may be taken as a standing rule that no man can afford to do without his pen in the modelling of his sermons. Cicero said, "The best master of the orator is his pen," and Cicero will be allowed to be a good authority in such matters. If you are going to deliver your sermon extemporaneously, still write, write much. Be diligent in the use of your pen.

A very able writer has said that there are two ways in which the written sermon may be prepared. The first is, by writing down the outlines of the subject, and then re-writing it when you have made up your

mind as to which is the best form. This is what may be described as finding your way with your pen to the order of treatment. The other way is by determining that the first time you write, the form shall be as complete as possible. I think that this second way is mistaken, and that the attempt to make your work complete at the start will only end in failure. Whatever you may be able to do after years of practice I know not, but I think you will find it well to work off the froth with your pen. It is by thinking with your pen that you will find your way to the heart of your subject. Most of our minds are like some of those bottles of wine which come from abroad ; you have to pour off the ullage before you can reach the wine. You may need to write off your first and crude enthusiasm. I am not sure that in the matter of preaching second thoughts

are not better than first, and the third the best of all.

You will find that this is what will happen. You will choose your text. There will have dawned on you the first conception of its meaning. Your mind will be full, perhaps, of the novelty or the attractiveness of your first thoughts. Write them down by all means, but depend upon it you are not going to use them as they are. For let your second thoughts go over the subject, and you will be possessed by a critical mood. Your thoughts will not seem so fit or worthy as they did at first. You feel bound to reject, to add, to rearrange. Do not be afraid. Go through it all over and over again. After a time you will find that the thoughts begin to come to you in clearer fashion and better form. Your third thoughts will perhaps harmonise with your first,

through the aid of the criticism of your second thoughts. Write till your mind is perfectly clear, and till you certainly know your own thoughts. You will gain accuracy of thought. Long ago Lord Bacon told us that if reading makes a full man, writing makes an exact man. We shall lose nothing by the pen-work which promotes exactitude, and so makes us truly masters of our thoughts. We shall get rid of those vague ideas which seem great, and we shall get in their place those simple and clear ideas which may be useful.

Further, writing is likely to give you the faculty of expression; for it often compels you to put things in various ways. Cultivate the habit of writing down your thoughts. Test them as they stand before you in black and white. You will see reasons for writing them afresh.

Things will strike you in a different way. In your efforts after clearness you will gain mastery over language, for mastery over language is little more than mastery over our own thoughts.

On these three things — Reflection, Reading, and Writing—you must rely if you are to accumulate fit and useful material. Briefly, then, what we have said amounts to this. Firstly, find out what you want: reflect. Secondly, supply yourself with it: read. Thirdly, clear away all the needless encumbrances, and get your thoughts on the subject clear: write. At this stage you are like the modeller who has found out how much clay he requires. He has now to use his power in modelling it.

What power shall we employ? My answer is—The power of truthfulness. Of that I now wish to speak very specially.

Our first wish, when we have provided our material, will be to set it fitly and worthily before our people. We are all human, and the desire to do well what we have to do is not altogether a bad one. You wish, then, that what you do shall be done as well as you can do it. This is reasonable, but it leads to snares. The desire to do well becomes the desire to excel. The desire to excel becomes the desire to be original; and when a preacher desires to be original his fate is sealed. Beware of that hateful word—Originality. There was at the Battle of Waterloo a certain ditch over which the French troops were obliged to pass, but as they charged over it numbers fell into it to rise no more. Originality is as that ditch to the preacher. Into it many a man of promise has fallen, and lost his power of higher usefulness. If you wish to be original, turn your back

upon this desire of originality. What do you mean by originality? Is it something out of the common? Do you mean that you do not wish to deal out the platitudes of the pulpit which have been so much condemned, that you do not wish to be commonplace in your sermons, and to say what other people have said a hundred times before? But consider. Do you wish to say something which is both true and striking? or do you wish to say something that is striking, whether it is true or untrue? If the former, then seek truth first; if the latter, your originality is untrue. The best way is the way of truth, and the best question to ask yourself is not "Is this original?" but "Is it true?" There is no peace in the work of him who is straining after that wretched thing people call originality. At the best we can be but messengers of what is true.

"I am the Voice," said the Baptist, and for us this saying is best; "I am the Voice of the truth which is given me to say; I seek no originality; I affect no eccentricity; I am the servant of truth." This is the honest attitude of mind; all other leads to self-deception and unreality, but this leads to the only real originality.

For what is originality? It is that which springs from the ultimate source of thought, which owes nothing to any other channel. It follows that in truth alone is there originality; and if God Himself be the root of all thought and life, then that which has its origin in Him is truth. To keep near to Him, to seek His truth, and to speak it, is the secret of the utterance which is original, and which, coming from Him who made man's spirit, cannot fail to reach the spirits of men. The true originality is truth. Originality in the mode

of presenting truth is nature's gift, and can only be ours when we are natural. The spirit of truthfulness, therefore, must be ours in our preaching work. This must enter into every part of it. We must treat with truthfulness our text, our subject, our people, and ourselves.

There must be truthfulness in the treatment of the text. This is not a needless caution. There are ways of dealing with texts which can only be described as untruthful ways. You choose a text; it is a striking text; it will produce an effect upon the congregation by the mere announcement; you do not ask what is the truth which underlies this text; you are content with the words. I doubt the wisdom or the rightness of this method. It is motto-preaching. There are cases, no doubt, in which the misapplication is too obvious to mislead. When Rowland Hill

preached against the extravagant head-dresses of his day, he selected as his text "Topnot, come down." That was striking if you like; it was certainly too grotesque an adaptation of the words "Let them that are on the housetop not come down" to deceive any one. But though the incident is attributed to a good man, I am not persuaded that it was wise or well for him to have so handled a text. But worse than a grotesque adaptation like this is the custom of selecting a text and forcing into it a meaning quite alien to the author's thought, and doing so, seriously, as though the sermon were an exposition of the text. Fénelon in his discourse on eloquence gives an example. He describes the friend who speaks in glowing terms of the very interesting and striking sermon which he has heard. The sermon had been preached on Ash Wednesday, and the text was "I have

eaten ashes as it were bread." The text seemed so admirably appropriate ; and the method of treatment was ingenious, and skilfully led up to the theme of Lent. But Fénelon concludes that the sermon was a sorry one, because in it Scripture had been falsely applied. The original meaning of the words had been neglected, and a totally foreign one imported into them. There was no connection between the sorrows of the Psalmist, who had suffered disaster and humiliation at the hands of his enemies, and the humiliation of a Christian who seeks to disengage himself from sinful pleasures. The same objection applies to treating the text "Why tarry the wheels of his chariot ?" as though the advent waited for was that of our Lord, or that of death, coming to deliver some waiting Christian out of the miseries of this sinful world. Expositions of this sort are

examples of violence and unworthy violence done to the old story. Such far-fetched falsehoods are in every way to be avoided. Those who preach from the Bible may well remember Cecil's saying — not less valuable now than in his day — "The meaning of the Bible is the Bible."

If you desire to deal with texts in this fashion you are a motto-preacher, and you should explain to your people that you are such a preacher. They can then go elsewhere if they wish for wholesome preaching. But I hope that you will cultivate a better and truer method by being ever true to your text.

Be true to your subject. There is a temptation to zealous men in this matter. It arises from the earnestness and devotion with which you are attached to certain great Christian truths. God forbid that I should say one word to lessen

your belief in those truths which God has made helpful to your souls. Cherish those truths, but do not suppose that you are bound to drag them in when you are preaching upon some text in which they have no appropriate place. To do so is to commence a faithless habit. Against this method I may cite the opinion of one whose name in Cambridge, and among Cambridge men, will be held in reverence and honour, for the life of devotion and piety spent in Cambridge—I mean Charles Simeon. He stated that it had been his aim in his *Horae Homileticae* not so to pervert the Scripture as to make it refer to Christ and His salvation when no such object appears to have been in the contemplation of the inspired writer. "He regrets to observe in some individuals what he knows not how to designate by any more appropriate term than that" (which, how-

ever, he uses with much hesitation) "of an *ultra-Evangelical* taste; which overlooks in many passages the *practical* lessons they were intended to convey, and detects in them only the leading *doctrines* of the Gospel."

This contains wise counsel. It reminds us that even zeal should be under the control of reverence for truth. Where this is forgotten much harm may be done. The hearers are irritated by irrelevancies. We dishonour the very truths we seek to exalt; we cannot justify our exegesis. Such methods are seldom defensible and are often offensive. We may pardon the Puritan divine who, when preaching on the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, divided his subject into three heads, showing first how by nature every man is an ass; secondly, how grace saddled and bridled him; and thirdly, how the Lord rides him in triumph into the New Jerusalem;

but we cannot forgive the preacher who brought together the parallel passages from the gospels, "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?" "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings?" and asked his people to observe the generosity which threw in the extra bird on the larger transaction.

We cannot commend those who find spiritual meanings and vital truths in every chance arrangement and incident of Old and New Testament story, who find deep significance in the fact that four-and-twenty knives were brought back from Babylon, who devote whole sermons to the bell and pomegranate of the high-priest's garment, who see an argument for the existence of hell in the everlasting burnings of Isaiah lxvi., and hints of the Holy Sacrament in the twopence given by the good Samaritan to the inn-keeper. All this is trifling, and when practised by

the preacher is likely to become mischievous trifling; for such treatment of sacred texts only reveals a spirit which is intellectually frivolous where it ought to be sincere, reverent, and earnest to preserve and to preach truth, not handling the word of God deceitfully. The truths we reverence can very well stand on their own natural and legitimate foundations. When will men learn that truth needs no unlawful or enforced aid? We should reverence truth too much to dream of supporting it by anything which is not truth. Our first duty towards our subject is to make it clear, and for this we must ask of any passage we wish to expound, What is the truth which lies here? what was the writer's meaning in these words? Make that truth preach to the people; make it clear to them; and you will have quite enough to do.

Be truthful to the people. Every school of thought has its pet phrases; and congregations addicted to certain lines of thought or attached to certain schools get into the habit of looking for the accustomed phrases. The temptation to use these is great. The expectant congregation can easily be satisfied. Their distrust of the young preacher (and there are always some distrustful critics at church) is lulled to sleep as soon as the pet phrase has been employed. The young man is all right. He is sound. He has given the required password. They may go to sleep; and they do go to sleep. There are those whose whole religion lies in a phrase. They look for and regard its use as the superstitious do that of a dream, an amulet, or a relic. The use of the expected phrase acts like a spiritual narcotic on hearers of this sort.

It is ill for the hearers to give them such things, and yet there are preachers who are not at ease till they have brought out the magic word. Sermons of such men are like a rabbit-hunt. The hunt begins: there is a scratching and a scrambling and a flinging up of dirt, then suddenly out comes the terrier with the wretched dead rabbit. So with the sermon in question. The preacher announces his text. We do not see how the phrase can well be brought in, the text hardly justifies it; but the preacher, like the dog, is equal to the occasion: he tears aside the difficulties, dives below the meaning, flings out some irrelevant generalities, and drags forth the expected phrase and pronounces it with unction. The smile of approval is forthcoming, then the contented folding of the hands, and the patronising slumber of people at their ease in Zion. I do not say never

use such phrases. If the phrase represents to you some real truth and you can honestly use it, do not be afraid to do so, but use it cautiously, seldom, and never without some explanation. But if you cannot use it honestly, avoid it; and deny yourself the use of it, if your mind does not attach any clear and real significance to it.

If I may speak frankly, I think that, as a rule, phrases are enemies of truth. A phrase in its first coinage is often the expression of a grand truth. It embodies some clear principle which thousands hold dear; its utterance evokes enthusiasm; it becomes a watchword; it is a living thing, because it expresses a real, intelligible thought. But when a generation has passed, the force of the phrase is weakened, because the stirring controversies which gave it birth no longer exist. Men's minds have drifted otherwhere. The earnest souls,

who fought for what they understood and loved, have disappeared. Their place is taken by those who have inherited their language but not their souls. The followers of a great movement have been succeeded by the utterers of phrases. The passionate devotion to truths has disappeared. The eager keenness to discern heretical phraseology proclaims that the worship of the letter has commenced its reign. From that moment the very phrase which meant truth, and was in its day so true, becomes the foe of truth and the source of spiritual torpor. Against this state of things be on your guard. Resolve never to be mere repeaters of phrases. If a phrase embodies a truth to you, speak out its truth simply and boldly; but never use it because it is a phrase, or because it is a phrase which the people expect you to use. Be more true to your

people than to allow them to rest on the magic of reiterated phrases. Be so true to them that you will give the heart of truth and not the mere semblance of it only. In failing to be quite honest with them you endanger your own integrity and, with it, your power of usefulness.

This brings us to the last counsel, viz. Be true to yourselves. First, be true to yourself from an intellectual point of view. Be content to use your own powers. Whatever gifts God has given you, use them to their utmost in the expression of His truth. Read for yourself; think for yourself. Take care that what you study becomes your own. Do not transfer knowledge from paper to paper, but assimilate what you study. Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest all that you can. Do not be ambitious to appear more or better than you are. Do not imitate

the frog in the fable. Remember, not every soil can produce the same fruits. "Nec vero terræ ferre omnes omnia possunt." Be true, therefore, to your own genius; for in so doing you are being true to that which God gave you. Cultivate and develop your own gift. Do not fling it on one side for the sake of copying another man. Secondly, be true to yourself from a spiritual standpoint. You may meet among your people many who are much more experienced in Christian life than yourself; they will speak of their experiences to you, and you may be tempted to think that because you are a clergyman in the parish you ought to be at least their equals in those things which belong to the kingdom of heaven. But here, perhaps above all here, be content: be humble: be ready to learn. Do not strain after that which God has not given

you. Do not attempt to transcend your own spiritual experience. Be true to yourself in this as in all else. It may be that you can only give to them as yet the milk of the Word; but if you give this, as God shall enable you from your own early experiences, it will be sweeter and more wholesome food than all the made-up food prepared out of borrowed experiences. Surely it is wise and well to speak only what you do know, and to wait patiently for the many things which God will reveal to you as your life and heart-experience grow. Follow closely His teaching and His light. As you do so, what He teaches will become so true that you needs must believe it. And if you see other men higher up on God's hill than yourselves, be content on the lower levels. Thank God that they are there. Trust Him that He will yet bring you there. In this way

you will build up experience and knowledge which will be more to you in the years to come than any present or hasty success. Do not be eager to overtake your life. Take quietly your daily bread. Nourish yourself on it. Be learning every day. Be wise enough to postpone preaching on some topics. Many a young preacher has been tempted to deal with matters of which, from the nature of the case, he must really be ignorant. If the poet counselled that a poem might be left nine years, may we not leave for a few years some subjects of which perchance in that time we may be prepared to speak? Do not let haste sow regrets in your life. Note all you can. Accumulate thought. Miss no opportunity of learning, whether by study or by experience. You will never meet with a single experience in life which will not prove valuable to you in later life.

I am persuaded that God apportions our experiences and grants us opportunities to fit us for the place to which He means to call us. Use therefore all offices and all experiences simply and truthfully, in the faith that by doing the work we are given to-day, we are fitting ourselves for that which God may give us to-morrow. In this, and in all, be true to yourselves.

Let me sum up what I have said. I have urged upon you to reflect, to read, to write. I have pointed out to you that in the use of materials so accumulated we must be possessed by a spirit of unfeigned truthfulness. All this may find expression in two words — diligence and sincerity. Exercise great diligence. Do not think that you can do by quickness or genius that which can only be done by simple, honest, hard work. Sir Joshua Reynolds pointed out to his students long ago that

reliance on talents to the neglect of hard work has brought it about that one who was looked upon as more than a man at sixteen has often been found to be less than a man at sixty. Bulwer Lytton puts similar wisdom into the mouth of one of his characters. He says: "I attribute my success in life to three things. I have never relied upon genius for that which only can be gained by labour; I have never attempted to teach what I have not thoroughly studied; and I have never made a promise which I have not done my best to fulfil." I need not point out the value of such counsel. It is as profitable in a clergyman's life as in other callings. Be examples in these things. Reverence hard work. Read and study before you preach. Make any sacrifice rather than fail or be deficient in your work. You are called to this. At your

ordination you will give the solemn pledge to be diligent students, devoted to such studies as may make you wax riper and stronger in your ministry. Be diligent.

Be sincere. Cultivate inward truthfulness. Do not be content with what I may call professional truthfulness. Be scrupulous to maintain inward integrity. Be earnest that the thing you preach is true for you as well as for your people. Let your utterances be the outpourings of what you truly feel, know, and believe. For this baptize your hours of study and preparation with prayer. Before and after and while you prepare your sermon, pray. Lay all your thought and labour at God's feet. Bossuet never entered the pulpit without prayer.

When Essex came back from Ireland under Queen Elizabeth's displeasure he consulted Lord Bacon, and asked whether

the Queen's displeasure was likely to be lasting. Lord Bacon replied, "To speak the truth, *nubecula est.* It is but a cloudlet; and if the cloud descend it will melt in mist, but if it go upwards it will come down in rain."

It is the same with our work, "*nubecula est.*" If we allow it to drop earthward it will vanish in profitless mist; but if we lift it upwards in prayer it will rise to the throne of God. He will touch it with His inspiration, and filled with His power it will descend in refreshing rain upon the thirsty hearts of men.

LECTURE IV

The subject of our lecture is the structure of the sermon. I beg to remind you at the outset that the best things grow, and they take their structure during their growth. Anything like an enforced, elaborate, and artificial structure defeats itself. Therefore I would lay down the preliminary caution that many of the counsels which I may give to-night are true of the later development of the preacher's experience, and are hardly as true, or as fully applicable, in the very early stages of his career. It is wise to remember this, for though rules may be

useful, they may be mischievous, and they almost certainly mislead those who seek to apply them before they have caught the spirit which underlies them. Moreover, each man must discover methods for himself; and if he is wise he will regulate the structure of the sermon according to his own genius and character. All that can really be hoped is that by such lectures as these some thoughts and principles may be scattered, which in time to come you may be able to assimilate, transform, and utilise according to your own method.

But there is a certain general principle of method which I think you will find to be of service even in your earliest attempts. You remember the passage in the prophecy of Ezekiel where the prophet is bidden to preach or prophesy to the dry bones. The bones lay scattered, disorganised, before

him; but, as he spoke, bone knit itself to its bone, the flesh came up and covered the framework, and at last the spirit of life from God came into them, "and they stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army." I think that we may find here an illustration of the method of preparation. For in the progress of the vision we see material, order, beauty, life; and the sermon should exhibit all these. We must have material, but we must not allow it to remain structureless material. It must be organised material, knit into form and clothed with beauty and instinct with life. In other words, our materials must be compacted of those elements which appeal to the reason and affection of our hearers. Too often sermons embody only those materials which the preacher favours, and the appeal of the sermon is limited in consequence. A man, for instance, of an

argumentative disposition will fill his sermon with reasoning, and his discourse bristles with suitable and unsuitable arguments. If, on the other hand, he delights in instructing people, he will pack his sermon close with an imposing amount of information. If, again, he has a poetical temperament, he will be tempted to make his sermon sparkle with quotations, metaphors, and literary allusions. If he is a man of a merely devout temperament (by which I mean devout without being anything else), he will be tempted to imagine that his ethos will atone for all deficiencies, and because the spirit of devotion is there, there is no need of conviction and instruction.

In all these instances there are defects. Those to whom we speak have minds, consciences, and hearts; and our aim should be to enlist the interest and alliance

of all these powers. The sermon should be reasonable, instructive, convincing, and persuasive. It should appeal to the understanding, the conscience, the imagination, and the affections.

Last time I spoke of the great lines of a clergyman's reading. I reminded you of the importance of pursuing those studies which will brace up the mind, enlarge the arena of knowledge, cultivate the imagination, and above all, quicken a devout spirit within us. As these should be the ranges of our studies, so all of these should find a place in the sermon. If the sermon be all reasoning, it will be dry; if it be full of information only, it will be pedantic; if it be overlaid with illustrations, it will leave the mind unsatisfied; if it be limited to devotional meditations only, it will lack robustness and so far effectiveness. Remember the nature of your people;

endeavour to meet them in their whole being. You will not find it a bad rule to ask yourself while preparing your sermon, Is there reason in what I am making ready? is there that which will appeal to the minds of thoughtful men? But ask also whether you are providing instruction for the ignorant. Here let me say that there is cheap chatter which tells us that the clergyman is behind the age. Do not be misled by this sort of talk. I certainly would not advise you to be content with ignorance which keeps you behind the age. But you may be tempted by idle talk of this kind to assume that all your hearers have read the last review or are acquainted with the last novel. You may be tempted to touch on these things instead of teaching what you were sent to teach. Remember that there may be people who are full of the spirit of the age, but who are

deficient in the ordinary knowledge which is common in a third-rate Sunday school. I have heard of the children of well-to-do and so-called cultivated people who were delighted with the story of the Prodigal Son, which they heard for the first time by accident — or rather by Providence — in church. We cannot too often remind ourselves that many things which are familiar to us are not familiar to our people. Our position is a difficult one, because we have to steer our way to the hearts and consciences of people whose knowledge and scientific appreciation may be in advance of our own, but who at the same time may be extremely ignorant on the subjects which it is our duty to teach.

It is not unwise to give explanations even of obvious things, if only we do so in a way which is natural and not patronising. I heard of a schoolmistress who had taught

the New Testament for years, and who yet had never realised the meaning of the Crucifixion till she happened to see that last scene delineated in a stained-glass window. Recognise the importance of giving information. The clergyman lives too much in the pulpit and too little in the pew. He forgets the weak, the ignorant, the untrained. Believe me, the man who sits in the pew is not offended at hearing what he already knows. If the clergyman tells him something which he knew before, he is not altogether displeased: he congratulates himself that he knows that. If the clergyman tells him something which he did not know, he is by so much the gainer. Be careful to weave real instruction into your sermon; strive that nobody who listens can go away without some clear idea of the meaning of the text or story with which you are dealing. And this can easily be

done without appearing to play the schoolmaster. The history, manners, and customs, which, when understood, throw light upon the passage, can be set forth in clear though subordinate place. When thus treated as supports to the main purpose of the sermon, there will be little likelihood that any hearer will feel that he is being lectured as a schoolboy. Briefly, instruction, though clear, should be subordinate to argument; for argument is essential to your main purpose, which is to convince.

Reason and information should enter into the sermon; but I plead that illustration may have a place there also. A sermon may be sound in reasoning and replete with information, but it may still be dull. There is illumination in illustration. But there is more. It is chiefly through illustration that the thought of the sermon can be brought near to the hearer's mind.

Imagination links thought with life, translates for the audience the abstract into the concrete, and shows how the principles which were strong and vivid in sacred story have their living message for our own day. It is well, then, that the preacher should sometimes, as his sermon takes shape, ask himself if his subject has been made sufficiently clear. If he feels doubt on the point, let him bethink himself whether his sermon is not all walls and no windows; and if so, let him take pains by illustration or example or story to let in the light.

But all these are of little value unless a true ethos pervades the sermon. Here, if anywhere, rules are useless. The ethos is the outbreathing of the spirit which is in us. If our souls are set on vanity, puffed up with self, demoralised by indolence or self-indulgence, no amount of effort can avail to make the tone of the sermon what

it should be. The only road to success here is the road of self-vigilance, of personal devotion and spiritual sincerity. For this we must be men who live in the realisation of God's presence and in personal communion with Him. In vain we shall strive to awaken spasmodic sentiment or create by effort the devotional feeling. We cannot in a moment contradict ourselves or counteract the subtle influence of character upon speech. Live, therefore, in prayer, and learn to consecrate all your hours of preparation and every effort of duty with constant and repeated prayer. When we rely not on ourselves, but on the spirit of the Lord, the true ethos will not be far from the sermon.

I have spoken hitherto of the elements which should find a place in the sermon. I now come to the subject of arrangement. You remember that Demosthenes said

action was the first, the second, and the third requisite for an orator. Of the sermon I would say that the first requisite is order, the second order, and the third order: without order there is no sermon. In many sermons this is disregarded; but order is imperatively needed for the sermon's sake, for the people's sake, and for your own.

For the sermon's sake. The value of the combination of two elements may depend upon the order in which they are taken. From chemistry we may learn this. The alkali must precede the acid if effervescence is to follow. It has been well said, "Without order in a discourse you cannot get into your subject, and without good order you cannot get out of it." An army in disorder, Quintilian reminds us, is a hindrance to itself. Parallel to this is the thought so often expressed that the

difference between an army and a mob is organisation. A speech without order has been aptly called a mob of words, but well-marshalled words add emphasis to thought. Be careful, therefore, about the order of the sermon.

For the sake of the people observe order. When you have decided on your subject, consider your people. Are they educated or uneducated? Let us suppose that they are educated. You may be sure that a disordered discourse will be intolerable to minds accustomed to some precision of thought. Order is indispensable for such an audience. But suppose that they are uneducated—are you going to conclude that anything will do for such? You cannot make a greater mistake. Here order is of even higher importance. Without order, incoherence will mark your sermon, and incoherence makes it unintelligible. The educated

person may indeed be able to disentangle your meaning from your chaotic expression, but the uneducated will be bewildered; whereas if you observe just and well-considered order, the educated will appreciate it and the uneducated will be able to understand. For the poor and ignorant, therefore, you will need to take pains with the structure of your sermon. In this Dr. Chalmers was an example to all preachers, for he took as much trouble in the preparation of his sermons for simple folk as he did in that for his university work. This is the spirit in which real work should be done. Slovenly, disorderly work carries little profit. For the sake, therefore, of those to whom you are sent, take the trouble to observe order in your sermons.

For your own sake be careful of order. If you are in the habit of flinging your thoughts on paper anyhow, you will do

harm to your own mind and character. The habit of accuracy is closely allied to truth; and the observance of order shows a kind of conscience. Disorder, on the other hand, betrays a spirit not fully alive to responsibility. It leads to that heedlessness which puts down anything without thought; it leads to a lack of reverence towards our work. Cecil said that it requires as much skill to know what not to put into a sermon as what to put into it. This is true; but it requires also a reverent courage to reject what is inappropriate or unfit. The preacher who fills up his sermon with padding, regardless of object or purpose, suffers a moral deterioration.

I hope, therefore, that we are agreed as to the importance of order in a sermon. But order is not sameness. Order may exist in more than one form. The same method does not suit all men. One man

has a gift for analysis; another a ready power of synthesis. A sermon may be topical, as it is called; it may be expository. Every man must follow his gift in these matters. Nature's order is not always the same, and each man must use his own style. This will readily be allowed; but it may be asked whether the preacher should vary his own style, or having discovered his own method adhere to that one method only. In other words, ought a man to form every sermon after the same model, or ought he to use a structure which varies according to his subject? One very eminent man (whose unique gifts gave him a commanding position among the very greatest and best preachers), Bishop Phillips Brooks of Massachusetts, gave his judgment in favour of adhering to one settled order. His argument was, that in the haste and

pressure of work there is an enormous economy of time in having a fixed framework or mould into which you can cast your subject. I admit the economy of time, but I cannot bring myself (though in the face of such an authority one may well doubt) to accept this view. It is certainly an economy to have my framework always ready. I am like the shipbuilder who is ready to build at any given notice a certain ship on given lines. The builder who confines his work to the construction of yachts may do well to have his lines ready; but if he accepts larger business he must be prepared with variety. In other words, the difficulty is that all subjects do not lend themselves to the same mode of treatment. There are subjects which almost claim an analytical treatment, and others which may be said to demand a synthetical method. Further, in expound-

ing a passage, the chosen framework will be of little avail. Consider, too, the variety of people whom you may have to address. The method which is suitable for the church may not be the best for the mission-room. Synthetic treatment may be best in the morning; analytical in the evening. The same subject may suit both town and country; but for country folk it may be wise to recast your material. In this question, therefore, I cannot help thinking that each man must work out his own answer. Personal capacity must be allowed a place in determining such matters. But I think that he is best equipped who is capable of dealing with various subjects in various ways, and can be analytical or synthetical as necessity arises. For such a man will be able to break the bread as his people are able to receive it. For him there are more ways than one to reach their hearts and minds.

It may also be worth remembering that all habits and customs have a reflex effect. We first form our own habits, and we then become their victims. This being so, it is always well to consider what possible effect this or that habit may have on our characters. It may seem too serious a consideration to import into a small matter like this of method in sermon-structure, and I certainly do not wish to import high moral significance into a question which is mainly intellectual; but, nevertheless, method seems to me largely like habit, and our intellectual activity may be dependent in some degree upon our choice of methods. To be in the habit of using only one method may result in sameness and monotony. Diversity, on the other hand, leads to freshness. New methods have in themselves new interest. There is less chance of the mind growing stale

when we exercise it in well-selected variety of method. Strong men, with free and fresh minds, can after long practice infuse their own freshness into the one method which they have made their own; but, till you have made your own method and established your own strength, I think that it will be a wholesome discipline to practise yourselves in more than one method.

But whatever plan you follow, there is one principle which should, I think, guide you, and which I might venture to describe as an indispensable and governing principle in all sermon-preparation, and that is the principle of unity. I know that the affectation of observing the unities has met with well-deserved ridicule. That pompous and ignorant patron of the provincial drama whom Nicholas Nickleby encountered will occur to your minds.

But over and above the absurdities and affectation which brought the pedantic preaching of the unities into contempt, there is virtue in the principle which demands harmony of conception and true coherence and consistency in our work.

Beauty consists very largely in the happy subordination of all details to some leading idea. The gift is less than the altar. The thought and purpose must dominate every part of the discourse. Fénelon speaks strongly on this point, though we may not approve of the illustration he uses. His illustration is a contrast between Greek and Gothic architecture. The Gothic appears to him to be overweighted with ornament. He prefers the severe simplicity and abiding unity of Greek architecture. We may not bow to his architectural opinion, but we shall all

accept the principle that everything which tends to divert the mind from the leading purpose of the work is a sign of bad taste in the workman. This is only the proper realisation of fitness and proportion. When Maclise heard a person break into loud admiration of some small object in the foreground of his picture, he felt that the praise was in truth blame. He was sorry to hear it, and forthwith he painted out the offending object. The trifle had no right to be there if it so arrested the eye of the spectator. It marred the composition of the whole. That is tasteful which carries one thought or one idea, and carries it pleasingly, to eye and heart. Bad taste in dress is distracting ostentation in details. Good taste demands harmony. The apparel must be in harmony with something. "Dress in the colour of your eyes," is the counsel

of some experts. Gounod used to say of the candidates who came to have their voices tried, "I see it in their eyes: one always has the voice of one's eyes." All these examples point in the same direction. That which is natural and beautiful is under the rule of some predominant note. Vulgarity in art, in dress, in all workmanship, is the ostentatious and distracting disregard of this principle. Therefore let the sermon, whatever tones it utters and through whatever changes it moves, be always governed by some one ruling thought, purpose, and aim.

This does not mean that the sermon need be tame. It only means that all arguments, information, and appeals should cohere and should gather round one central leading thought, as in the prophet's vision the bones were gathered into human forms. Though there were many bones, they were

all so drawn together that they built up, not formless things, but men. So should a sermon, with whatever material it be made, yet be fashioned into that which proclaims itself as a clear and intelligible message. I have sometimes thought, indeed, that a sermon ought to be a kind of syllogism; and I still believe that, taken in a large sense, there is truth in the thought. In the syllogism there is the major premiss, the minor premiss, and the conclusion. The sermon should correspond. There is some truth, a truth which you have seen as a truth of God, and which you desire to make clear to your people. This is, as it were, your major premiss. But this is not enough. The medium through which alone you can speak to people is the medium of their own experience. Till you can bring your truth into correspondence with this you

speak in vain. You must speak in the language they understand; and the language they understand is the language of the life and of the heart, of the inward and outward experiences of existence. The truth may be divine, but the audience is human; and in order that the truth may reach men, you must bring it to them through that which they know and understand. Besides divine truth, you need to remember human experience. In this latter you have your minor premiss. A sermon should link together divine truth and human experience, and from these should enforce its application as an irresistible conclusion. You will not, of course, be so foolish as to suppose that I am commending to you a hard, dry, syllogistic structure. True art conceals itself. What is needful is that you should be careful to realise and keep clear in your

minds the truth you wish to enforce, and that you should carry this truth into the range of the human life of your audience. The recognition that this is your work and duty will perhaps give you the line and direction which you can follow. It will furnish you with a principle which you can carry into your preparation. It may facilitate the arrangement of your material. It will at least start you in the right track in selecting fitting material. For if there be no truth of the divine kingdom which you have to tell, then what message of God have you to give? If there be no human experience with which you can associate this truth, where is your message for man? Or how can you bring conscience and heart under your influence unless the tones of heaven and earth mingle in your sermon? Without the human experience, the sermon runs the risk of becoming hard and dog-

matic. Without the divine truth, it will only deal out flabby humanities. St. Chrysostom was great both in his knowledge of the Bible and of men. He was a master in the art of blending the divine truth with human experience. We do well to remember that we are called to be "divines." None the less let us remember how true it is that we can only touch humanity by being human. If I have carried your thoughts thus far with me, you will follow me when I say that the ideal and warrant of this principle is found in our Lord Himself. After well-nigh nineteen hundred years of preaching, Jesus Christ Himself still remains the one sermon for the world. He is the convincing ideal of life, embodying in Himself that which lays hold upon the conscience and meets the heart of humanity. In Himself He unites the living divine truth and the living

human experience; therefore He is supreme in the spirits of men. If we wish our sermons to be reflections of Him to our people, we shall make them resemble Him in this, that the divine and the human shall both find place in them. In Him divine truth expressed itself in human form. His incarnation gives us a message of method which has often been forgotten in doctrinaire ages, when opinion was mistaken for faith and philosophy for religion. Against this His incarnation has borne witness; and the last who should reduce their sermons to theological essays or metaphysical speculations, the last who should forget that true Christianity appeals to human nature in its loftiest aspirations and in its deepest and most sorrowful experiences, are those who realise the true divinity and perfect humanity of Him who was Son of God as well as Son of man.

If in our sermons we set Him forth to our people as He truly is, in His strength and in His sympathy, if our sermons reflect Him and preach Him, we shall reach men's spirits, for they will thus be drawn unto Him.

The framework of the sermon, then, should obey some principle of unity. But the framework is not everything. When the bones have been knit together so as to present an articulate form, they needs must be clothed with flesh. The outline of a sermon is a skeleton at the best. We have still to clothe our thoughts in language. And here the first requirement is that language should be fit and appropriate. Now good and useful thoughts may appear in feeble, meagre, and unworthy form. It is possible so to vest our thoughts that they shall be concealed rather than revealed. The first condition of fitness of speech is clearness.

It is the fashion (why, I know not) among young ladies who sing to be inarticulate. We may hear the voice but not the speech of her who sings. One is tempted to ask why, when words are wedded to music, they should be denied their natural rights, or why, when words are made eloquent in melody, the power of their eloquence should be lost by their becoming inaudible. It is satisfactory to find Gounod remarking that pure diction is the first law of song. We may echo this view with regard to the sermon. Clear language—language, that is, which carries its own meaning straight, and without starting side-puzzles in the minds of our hearers—is the first condition of fitness of language. From this it will follow that what is simple and natural is best. The ambition of grand or high-sounding words is a poor ambition, and like most mean ambitions it defeats itself.

Let us avoid the example of the clergyman who counselled the boys, to whom he was preaching on the subject of mirth or cheerfulness—"Let your mirth be as the æstival electricity, lambent, but innocuous." Talk English and not Johnsonese. Let your thought govern your language, and not your language your thought; and for this purpose give your thought its natural expression. Do not let your minnows talk like whales. Is your thought simple? Be content with simple words. Is your thought noble? Then simple language most nobly drapes it. If you use lofty and dignified language, let it be because the thought itself insensibly lifts your style to a loftier range. The glory of the white crests upon the ocean wave lies not in their froth and foam, but in the fact that they are lifted high by the great insurgent mass of resistless waters which roll them towards

the shore. They are like the shaggy mane upon some lion's neck, great because they speak of a lion's strength. Words, in like manner, have no greatness in themselves, but in the thoughts below them. As these grow full and strong our language will grow nervous, tense, eloquent. The cultivation of word-worship is the decay of thought. The ambition of word-painting is a small one, and must thwart true eloquence; for if your thoughts be not eloquent your words will only mock them.

Briefly let me give you a few words of counsel on this matter. Keep clearly before your mind the end you have in view. Make straight for it. You will thus be kept from rambling too far into tempting but irrelevant fields, and you will not greatly covet the golden apples on which magniloquent men waste their time.

Be direct. Write as if you were writing

a letter to a friend rather than as if you were writing an essay. I mean put the personal feeling, personal interest, and personal conviction into it. Try and realise that your object is to persuade, to instruct, to help, and to edify. You are not writing for a professor's eye; there is no prize at stake, except this—the prize of being able to help some anxious, sorrowful, or perplexed heart. Let your wish be to say what you have to say so that it may bring food to that hungry heart, and you will surely fall into a natural and unaffected style of address.

Lastly, if you are to look for models, find them in speeches rather than in sermons. You will gain more by reading John Bright's speeches than by reading Blair's sermons. The object of the sermon is not to produce a dissertation which will be praised for its elegance of tone and

phrase, but to say something which will move men. Those men who have known how to speak clearly, directly, earnestly, are our best guides here; and in this there are few better than John Bright.

For the sermon, then, we need material, order, language—the bones, the framework, the flesh. But this is not all. There yet remains—perhaps more important than all else—the moment when the sermon is to become a living thing among men. The sermon has to be preached. We touch here the question of delivery. It is impossible to evade the often discussed claims of written and spoken sermons. The debate on this matter seems not always to have been wisely conducted. King Charles II.'s order to your University on the subject was one of those foolish acts which show how easy it is to forget that all gifts are not the same.

God gives to one man after this manner, and to another after that. It is a great mistake to suppose that there is not room for both methods. It seems to me foolish not to realise that however good the written or spoken plan may be, it cannot be good that either should claim to be regarded as the only method. Good and eminent men have preached written sermons. Good and eminent men have preached what are called extempore sermons. There is much to be said on both sides. There is deliberation, caution, protection against some rash phrase, the opportunity of literary polish, in the written sermon.

On the other side, let me give you two opinions. Professor Butcher, in his *Aspects of the Greek Genius*, says: "How few men write like themselves and give us a true impression of what they are. Once on

paper, men are apt to lose their own character, and either to become neutral and impersonal, or to take unconsciously a fictitious personality." There is force in this. There is a self-consciousness which, once awake, thwarts and criticises, and so disturbs the full expression of our thoughts and of ourselves when we take the pen. Insensibly the personal and intellectual attitude shifts. We tend to become critical, doubtful; we no longer think so much of persuading others as of justifying ourselves. The persons addressed are less to us than the thing we write. From this it would follow that if we write our sermons it is of moment that we should at least try to escape the tyranny of the written style, and endeavour to write as though we were speaking to a friend.

My next citation is from Archdeacon

Hare, who wrote: "What do our clergy lose by reading their sermons? They lose preaching; the preaching of the voice in many cases, the preaching of the eye almost always." The significance of this is that the force of a man's personality is weakened. Both the citations point in the same direction. The spoken sermon seems to bring the man himself into closer contact with the people. The manuscript acts like a screen and seems to keep the fire off. A man needs a great deal of personal force and fire to make himself felt through it. There have been such men; but it is a rare gift to be able so to realise the people when you are alone in your study that you can write as though you were pleading with them face to face.

There is another condition which must not be overlooked. The time, place, and presence of the audience create conditions

very different from those under which the sermon has been prepared. The thoughts and truths to be spoken may remain fit and appropriate; but the written language may not meet the occasion. Another mood may be on the preacher; he is responding to the sympathy of the moment and to the subtle unspoken appeal of the people who are there. The machine which worked well enough in the cool temperature of the study will not work in the temperature which the sense of common need and sympathy has heightened. As he reads his sermon the preacher feels that in his present mood, though he would have written this truth, he would not have written it thus. But not being accustomed to speak he cannot modify his language, or bring his utterance into harmony with the needs of the moment. The power of personal communion between a man and his audience

is inexplicable, but real. The bond of common life is felt, and it kindles the soul. Responsive sympathy wakes intelligence, memory, and love. The preacher enters into the spirit of his hearers. He speaks, and they in their turn enter into his spirit. It is something at such moments to be able to adjust your speech so that it may be truthful to the hour as well as to the theme. If you are truly master of your subject and know it, as a skilful captain knows every tide and current, promontory and bay, you will be able to shift your course without departing from your general route, to seize and use the changing wind and more successfully to make your port.

What follows from these considerations is chiefly this. Let the written sermon be as though it were spoken, and the extempore sermon as though it were carefully written. Let the spoken sermon be the

offspring of much writing and much study. Let the written sermon be always so well mastered and so familiar that it may be read as though spoken. Let it be always written with the remembrance of your people, that in the preaching it may be as the communing of your own heart with theirs. As you write, you should listen to your words as well as see them, should hear them as though spoken in the church. You must escape the essay-feeling; you will thus be able to test whether you are phrasing and fashioning your sermon as the simple and natural outpouring of truth from your soul to their souls. In this way your own personality will enter as a living thing into your sermon.

Here I might end were there not one matter more. Our personality may and should live in our sermons, but not thus is there that quickening of God which

we most desire. The imagery of the prophet will help us here. After he had prophesied to the bones, and the bones had come together, bone to his bone, and flesh had clothed them, so that they began to assume their human form, the prophet was bidden once more to prophesy, not this time to the dead men at his feet, but to the four winds of heaven. After you have gathered your material, ordered it, and clothed it with speech, it is still your poor weak effort, strengthless for the higher purpose of your work. You need the breath of the Spirit of God to give life to your message. Around you, wherever you are, in the city parish or in the scantily peopled village, there is the presence of that Divine Spirit in whom we live and move and have our being. From all quarters, and in every lonely or crowded place, does the Spirit move in the spirit

of man. He will preach best who prays most, and who after the most careful preparation relies not on self, but on that Spirit which can make our dead thoughts to live, and can quicken the nerveless hearts of multitudes till, filled with the vital force of heaven, they become mighty forces for good, and stand before the world an exceeding great army of God.

LECTURE V

I WISH to speak to you to-night of the preacher in relation to his age. We may exaggerate the importance of our own age, or we may despise it. Both habits are wrong. Schiller's saying respecting the poet expresses the fitting attitude which the wise man should occupy towards his own times: "The poet should be the child of his age, but woe to him if he be its favourite or its slave." This sets forth very fitly the relationship of any man, whether prophet, preacher, or poet, towards his times. He should be "the child of his age." We see what this expresses. Every man owes

allegiance to his age. The atmosphere which he breathes is that of the age in which he has been born. He is the son of that special epoch. He owes it reverence; but he does not owe it, nor any age, servile homage or thoughtless flattery. Reverence the age in which you live, but do not dread it. Yield it the homage which all those born in it are bound to give it, but do not be enslaved by it. To put this in another form, you must be in your age, but you must not be wholly of it.

Recognise that you are the child of your age. Resolve not to be its slave.

I. Recognise that you are the child of your age. Therefore reverence it—learn its language—understand its spirit.

1. Reverence it. It is a common temptation to pay homage to any other age than that in which our lot is cast. We look wistfully back on other epochs and regret that our

lot was not cast in them. This is the wish to have lived in any century than the one in which God has called us to live. Some think, speak, and act as though the third and fourth centuries of our era were the only worthy centuries; others have hearts only for the tenth; to others, again, the sixteenth century is all in all; while not a few of us have postponed our worship till the twentieth century shall have brought us its imagined good. Why should we thus forget or ignore the very century in which by God's providence we were born? To do this is a blunder and to forfeit our power of influence. It is a blunder to do so, for, whether we like it or not, it is in the nineteenth century, and in no other, that we are living. It is in this year of grace that our duty is to be found. We sigh. Yes, it must be so; we wish, perhaps, that we might have lived in some more romantic epoch

than in this hard, prosaic nineteenth century. But here again we make a mistake. We are carried away by the poetical feeling of distance and we clothe other ages with glory. In matters of history as in landscape—

> "'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view,
> And robes the mountain in its azure hue."

No age was romantic to the people who lived in it. We see it surrounded with the halo which memory, story, and heart-stirring achievements lend to it. We may give it a place far loftier than that which belongs to it; and we may overlook the romance of our own day visible to all who can recognise the possibilities of the age in which they live. The men who moved their age were not the men who lived in dreamy regrets over the romance of other days: they were men alive to the tendencies of their own era, who perceived its dangers and its prospects, and who sought to do their duty in it. These

were the men who secured greatness for their age. If we are to serve our age we must learn to realise its possibilities and we must study its characteristics. We cannot do so, if we indulge in comparisons which tempt us to despise it. Nay, rather let us reverence our age, as the age in which by God's providence we were born. Our work lies not in the past, but in the present. Our task is to serve our generation by the will of God. We can aspire to no nobler duty than this.

Let us reverence it as men who realise the possibilities of the age in which they live. It is easy, in seeking to praise things which are far off, to become blind to the splendours which lie at our feet; but we must be blind indeed, if we cannot discern some glory in our own times. It is no age of twilight slumber in which we live. It is an age in which the horizon of

knowledge has been enlarged, and powers undreamed of have been put into our hands. It has disclosed to us the order and development of living things. It has with pickaxe and spade disinterred the buried pages of the earth's story. It has laid open the foundations on which human history is reared. It has demonstrated the common elements out of which the universe has been built. While it has seemed to rob man of his glory, it has robed him with a greater glory than any which it has taken away. With the same breath with which it taught him that he was but a part of nature, it has told him how great a part of nature he is and how truly he is the crown of all created things. It is an age not satisfied to rest content with the achievements of the past — its very discontents witness to its greatness, and to its capacity to achieve yet greater things. It is an

age in which a strange sadness mingles with an unquenchable hopefulness. To minister to it we must understand its melancholy and sympathise with its hope. We must be able to console and to encourage, to banish its needless regrets, and to move forward with it in its march of conquest and of hope—nay, to do more, to point forward to the Shekinah light which moves before it, and to sustain it with the faith which grows out of faith in God, that "to-morrow will be as to-day and much more abundant." For the past with its heritage of knowledge is ours, and the future advances towards us with hands laden with gifts. We are as those to whom is given the wisdom of age and the elasticity of youth.

> "We are ancients of the Earth
> And in the morning of the Times."

Reverence your age, but reverence it with the homage of truth, for in no better

way can you serve your age or render it reverence than by showing that your reverence for it is second to, and so safeguarded by, your reverence for truth. Even in the sacred calling which is to be yours there is temptation to suppress truth out of deference to the prejudices of our age. If we are the children of our age we must take heed lest we become its slaves.

But here there are two temptations to which we are exposed. First there is the temptation to state as truth what is really only an exaggerated phantom of what is true. The jackal precedes the lion, but the jackal is not the lion. To outrun truth is not truthfulness. The growing light of knowledge and criticism is not equally distributed over men's minds. Many are blind to the new aspects of truth. Many cling to their prejudices as though they were undoubted truths. But the exaggeration of new

aspects of truth is not a real remedy for this state of things. We cannot hope to diminish prejudice by accentuating opposite views. To insult prejudice is not to dispel it. The second temptation leads us in the opposite direction. We may be tempted to suppress what we feel to be true out of an ignoble fear. These are temptations which we may meet. They are felt with special acuteness in an age of rapid movement and accumulated discoveries. Under these circumstances what ought to be the attitude of the teacher who desires to be faithful to himself and to truth, and also to help, not damage, the faith of his people? He cannot be other than open-eyed towards truth. Honesty and earnestness demand this. He cannot be other than gentle and considerate towards the weak and the ignorant. His compassion and his zeal for their spiritual and moral progress necessitate this.

Shall he then exercise a kind of reserve in his teaching? If by this is meant that he should ever allow himself to state as true what he believes to be untrue, or to declare to be untrue what he is persuaded is true, then our answer must be, no such reserve is possible to an honest man. Such reserve is an ignoble reserve. Never, therefore, exercise any reserve with regard to anything which is true, when it is your bounden duty to speak. But at the same time we may remember that it is not our duty to speak of every conceivable aspect of truth. As honest men we shall say nothing that we are not persuaded is true; as wise men regardful of the real purpose of our ministry, there may be many true things of which we shall not speak. There may be many matters of interest on which we may have adopted what are called new views; we may be persuaded of the truth of these

views; but we are not called to be exponents of every new thing even if it be true. While truth is to be spoken, the use of edifying should be remembered.

To act on this principle protects us on the one side from being untrue to ourselves, and on the other from flinging broadcast among our people theories which may prove to be little more than our crude paraphrases of other men's doubtful speculations. Be truthful with both the courage and the reticence of truth. You will be the more desirous of this if you realise that you are living in a scientific age. You will be resolute in this principle if you remember that you are little likely to glorify God, or to help forward the welfare of your people, or the cause of religion, either by suppressing any needful truth, or by entering upon discussions which are outside your province. But there are

matters of which we must speak, and in treating of which we cannot avoid the realms of critical and scientific inquiry. We cannot without cowardice or insincerity skilfully evade every subject about which old and new views are in conflict. Then we must not hesitate to speak what appears to us to be true. But here again our duty is to be mindful of our people's welfare. It is possible in the exposition of our views to state what we believe, in an aggressive and offensive fashion. It is possible to pursue a destructive method ; but it is always wiser and better to follow a constructive one. He who does so will succeed in being instructive. The real danger arises when the teacher of new truth speaks as though this new truth were the only truth, and makes no effort to show that the new truth is related to principles and convictions which enter into the hearts and lives and

minds of men. If you are preaching on a passage drawn from some book of the Bible, the date of which is earlier or later than has been popularly supposed, do not begin your sermon by announcing that the date at the heading of this book is "all wrong." Do not abruptly declare that all the views which have ever been held by anybody on the subject have been "conclusively proved to be incorrect." I call that a brutal way of dealing with the subject. Your statement about the date may be true in itself, but if you stun people whom you wish to persuade, they will find it hard to understand your arguments. It is quite possible, and it is much better, to approach the same subject in a different way. It is always our duty to give the spiritual teaching a foremost place. All critical and exegetical matters should lead up to this. We may explain, we may draw

the picture of the manners and customs which the passage demands, we may set forth the historical background, but the higher purpose should maintain the supreme place in our thoughts. When this is the case, questions of debate and controversy will be more or less lightly touched ; and they will be set out in a constructive way. We shall not be as one who knocks the crutch from the lame man's arm before he has given him something better to walk with. Be truthful enough, moreover, to be sometimes alive to your ignorance. Do not be afraid to acknowledge that there are some matters which are as yet beyond your range. It requires some courage to confess this, but if truthfulness be our rule there may be times when this course will be the only one open to us. This determination will save us from dealing precipitately, and therefore crudely, with

questions which we have not studied. There are plenty of questions connected with science, Biblical criticism, and sociology on which we can exercise self-denial and patience and forbearance. Do not be impetuous—still more, do not yield to the impulse which takes pleasure in frightening the dull and limited minds of worthy folk with startling statements. A clergyman should not behave like a schoolboy, who lets off fireworks for the pleasure of causing a panic. Such a disposition does not contribute to the advance of truth: it does not promote the spirit of confidence and mutual respect which should exist between you and your people. At the same time, cultivate the spirit of candour. Show that you are awake to all the messages of God from whatever source they come, for God speaks through many books—the book of nature and the book of history, as

well as the books of the Bible ; and besides these, He has given us the ever-open book of the human heart. Whatever of truth comes to us from these books, do not be afraid to trust it. In the long run there will be no contradictory message from them. At any rate, to all of them must our ears be open if we are to minister with reverent truthfulness to our own generation.

2. To carry out your ministry efficiently you must do more than reverence your age, you must also learn its language and understand its spirit. Learn its language. I need not remind you that language slowly undergoes a process of change. The speech of one age is not as the speech of the preceding age. I cannot help thinking that this fact is not sufficiently realised by teachers and preachers. There is often as much difference between the language of

one age and that of another, as there is between one provincial dialect and another. It would have been as hard for the Englishman of the Stuart period to understand the Englishman of Chaucer's day as it is for the peasant of Norfolk to understand the Yorkshire dalesman. The preacher must needs be alive to the changes of speech and phrase which have taken place and still are taking place. I once listened to a good sermon, which was at the same time singularly ineffective, for the simple reason that its language was the language of fifty years ago. There was nothing to object to in the language itself, except that it abounded in phrases which have lost their force, and are almost meaningless in our ears. If we are to avoid ineffectiveness we must speak the speech of our own day. In our studies we are apt to catch the style and to adopt the phraseology of our

favourite authors ; we are apt to forget that the language of our most excellent and rightly approved theological writers often needs translation, if it is to be a living language to our people. Would any congregation of the present day really appreciate a sermon cast in the style of Hooker, Bishop Andrewes, or Bishop Hall, or even Jeremy Taylor? They are excellent masters, if you will, but they spoke to the men of their generation, and we have to speak to the men of ours. To use their style, however excellent, is to lose touch with our people, and with it the power of reaching their intelligence. The Church of England has followed the Apostolic rule of enjoining on her ministers that they are to use "a language understanded of the people." The spirit of this principle throws upon us the duty of seeing that the people do understand us, and that we spare

no pains that what we say shall come to them in language which is effective, because it is the language of their hearts and of their homes.

Now it does not seem a difficult task which is thus set us. Our power to do it will depend chiefly on two things—the observance of a due proportion in our studies, and the cultivation of close and friendly intercourse with our people. It will be necessary to give our studies their true proportion. If we confine our studies to one class of subjects or one kind of writer, we lose the sense of the relative value of matters. It is by comparison that we judge distances and perceive qualities. Students who bury themselves in one set of studies lose the power of discrimination. They are tempted to regard their one subject as sufficient for all knowledge. They give it authority beyond its province.

Whatever question arises, they seek for an answer in their favourite author, or in their one row of volumes. They become learned in one department of knowledge, but their learning is pedantic and useless because it is unaccompanied by that general breadth of view which keeps men from injudicious applications. Cultivate a wide and healthy breadth in your studies. Be acquainted with the past ; be alive to the present ; and use all knowledge in its place and season. Do not take your science from the Fathers, nor your theology from some modern novel. Remember the true end in all your studies. When you read your Bible, you read it to search out the principles of the spiritual kingdom, you do not read it to discover the laws of matter or the facts of natural philosophy. When you read the Fathers, you read them as those who throw light on the

history of theological opinion, but you do not read them as experts in science. In all your studies remember the range and limit of the writer. Where he is speaking within his province, give him sympathetic attention. Beyond his province, he is of no value. Gather knowledge from all sources and from writers of all ages; but remember that you cannot learn to speak the language of to-day by studying the theology of the past. Early and later divines teach us excellently well on certain matters, and for these we do well to read them, but they are not infallible even on those points, and on some questions they were necessarily in complete ignorance; but in addition to this, their modes of expressing truth are seldom fitted to the nineteenth century. The thing which is true in St. Chrysostom or St. Augustine, often needs to be translated and rephrased if it

is to become intelligible to the men of our own day. We must take care lest in studying the great men of the past we forget the language of to-day. The phrases of the past have altered meanings in the present. If you would become apt in the language of your own times, you will gain more for your purpose from ordinary modern text-books of history, science, and literature, than you will out of whole libraries of ancient treatises. Do not be content with saying, I preach the truth. Do not be content till you have translated the truth into the language of your own day. Study that language which gets near to the heart of the people. The language of the greatest sons of the past is not sure to reach that heart. The sermons of Latimer and Jeremy Taylor and South would find yawning audiences among ourselves. We need to alter the obsolete phraseology of

the past into the living language of to-day. That language you must use if you are to make truth clear to your people. Read Dr. Carpenter's *Energy in Nature*, or Emile Caillard's *Forces of Nature*. Study books like these, because they put you in immediate contact with the thought and language of your own time. Study them, because they express the teaching which is being given to those whom you have to address. For the same reason visit our public galleries and museums. There are to be found in them increasing opportunities of education. Read the stories pictured on their walls. There you may learn in the stratification of the rocks and soil the unfolded tale of the growth of the earth. There you may meet with the gigantic forms of those creatures who dwelt as our predecessors on this globe. It is well to know something of these.

Cultivate, if I may say so, a bowing acquaintance with the ichthyosaurus and the iguanodon. Such knowledge will enlarge the mind, and help us to apprehend the language of our times. I am not advocating the use of scientific terms or the ambition of long words, but only that general knowledge of the thought and speech of the age which will contribute to clear expression of our thoughts, and to sympathy with the ideas of our people. But this is not all. Our knowledge must not be of books and museums only. We need to gain knowledge of our people and their speech. Be much among your people. Study their ways of thinking and speaking. Observe the value which they attach to the phrases which are current among them. This will correct any tendency to pedantry of either ancient or modern form. You will learn the life and heart of your people.

You will establish that living sympathy which will find expression in simple and natural language. Their heart will be with your heart, because your heart is with theirs.

3. This leads to our next thought. We must not only speak the language, we must above all catch the spirit, of the age. You will have understood that I do not counsel you to parade all the information you may gather from scientific treatises or visits to museums. Nothing is more objectionable, or more useless, than a sermon packed with pedantic display of the knowledge superficially and cheaply picked up in the week. Your studies must be *bonâ fide*. You must read that you may know, and not merely that you may seem to know. You must not appear among your people as the purveyor of shallow novelties, or as one who appears to challenge

approval on the score of his being abreast of the times. Here, as elsewhere, the letter killeth. It is the spirit of our age with which we must be acquainted. We must not be ambitious of any parade of human learning, ancient or modern. We must rather so study that our people may feel that even when we are speaking on the simplest possible topics that have no relationship with any scientific question, we are treating them with the spirit of a thoughtful man whose mind moves in sympathy with the best thought of his day, and who reverences truth from whatever source it may come. To do this is more useful than to take some parody of a scientific statement, and enjoy yourself and disgust the better class of your people by crushing your invented adversary in the pulpit. You are not called upon to do such things; there is very little profit in them. As you

read, study in the spirit of the age. When you speak let every person feel, from the very way in which you speak, that you are acquainted with the discoveries and problems of the age in which you live, and that you are capable of treating your subject candidly and intelligently.

Study the spirit of your age. We sometimes are told that our age is an irreligious age. The age is scientific, but it is not therefore irreligious in its spirit. Some indeed have argued that it must be so; but this appears to me either a thoughtless or an insincere mode of argument. It is perfectly true that scientific studies may be conducted in an irreligious spirit, but there is nothing necessarily irreligious in the spirit of investigation. On the contrary, the spirit of investigation is a religious spirit in the world, for if it is sincere it must be earnestly athirst for truth. To

argue from misuse against all use is a dangerous argument. It is possible to turn its edge against the most reasonable and most religious of customs. Our church services may be made irreligious when they are conducted in an irreligious manner, but we should despise as well as resent the argument that because one man imports an irreligious spirit into divine service, therefore all such services are irreligious. But there is no need to waste time or words on such faulty arguments. I desire only to caution you against the too common assumption on the part of timid and inexperienced people that to be scientific is to be irreligious. *Tres medici, duo athei* is not true, and it is neither just nor wise to imagine that it is. Above all things we need to be just and truthful if we are to help and understand our age. Indeed, if we are to serve our generation we must

cultivate the patient, honest, and truth-loving qualities of the genuine scientific spirit. This leads me to say, do not be irreligiously hasty. There are many who cannot formulate their thoughts and views in the current phraseology of Christendom. They feel they must be true to themselves. They dread lest by appearing to countenance phraseology to which they cannot subscribe they should be taken to agree with that with which they do not agree. But they are not therefore unchristian. They recognise that mankind has inherited in Christianity an untold wealth of spiritual thought, and a power of ministry to the religious consciousness of the race. And they would not dream of damaging that power or of robbing men of that inheritance.

Many of those whom you may be tempted to denounce may, perchance, not

be far from the kingdom of God. It is well to remember that our Lord pronounced a woe not only against those who took away the key, but also against those who hindered them that were entering into the kingdom. We need to take heed lest in our ministry we, by the petty spirit of ignorance or misunderstanding, appear to close the gate of heaven to any seeking soul. You know what disastrous results this attitude of mind has wrought in the history of the past. I need only to mention the name of Galileo, or to remind you how John Owen wrote that the philosophy of Newton was a vain speculation and dangerous to the authority of Holy Scripture. John Owen was in many ways a great man, but he was profoundly ignorant of the science and spirit of his age. The history of the past may give us lessons for our duty in the present. And the duty which it teaches is the

duty of cultivating an appreciative spirit towards our own age, lest in misunderstanding its drift and tone we fail to do our duty in it.

It is, moreover, a blunder to think that every movement of thought is hostile to religion. To think this is to give away the battle beforehand. To believe this is to forget that the Lord sits above the waterflood and the Lord remaineth a King for ever. It is worse than weakness to lift up our hands in terror at the advance of knowledge and to cry aloud that the foundations are cast down. Our faith ought to be of stronger metal. We ought to rely upon that Providence which ordereth all things in heaven and earth. But more, we ought to be intelligent enough to perceive that a great deal of the present age movement is on the side of faith. We live in times that may be described as difficult times. Questions

are debated, and we cannot escape the sound of debate. You will be exposed to the necessity of saying "Aye" or "No" upon many questions in the progress of your life. But you will not be able to answer wisely either Aye or No, unless you have realised how many are the elements in modern thought which are helpful to faith. It is not for me to pronounce an opinion upon scientific matters, but it seems to me that the fear which many entertain of the theory of evolution is a mistake. Certainly the strongest help to faith in the present day comes from those who have frankly accepted it as a working theory. With trivial or secondary points modern thought may indeed be in conflict, but it often affords support and illustration to weightier matters of faith. Essential matters remain untouched. Light has been thrown upon the growth of religion. Our notions may

be modified, but our spiritual convictions are unimpaired, and even strengthened. The future has been illuminated. The life of the world to come has been brought into clearer relief with the intenser realisation of the one spiritual principle ever working in man's life.

But there is yet another reason for catching the spirit of our age. By doing so you will learn to avoid dull and offensive blunders. We shall not, for instance, use the illustration of a magnet passing over and attracting a number of metal filings as exhibiting the manner in which the bodies of the dead or their scattered members may be raised again. One hardly knows whether to smile or to sigh over an illustration like this, which reveals alike bad science and bad theology. It is difficult to pardon St. Augustine for teaching that in the resurrection every material item we had ever lost,

even to the parings of our nails, would be restored to us; but it is quite unpardonable that a Christian of the nineteenth century should sanction such absurd and unscriptural materialism. In the same way we shall not foolishly declare that cremation destroys the doctrine of the Resurrection, for we shall realise that the power of God cannot be set aside by our crude ideas. We shall not reject historical or geographical explanations of difficulties or customs with the view of gaining credit for greater spirituality of mind, and of being able to claim that "we walk by faith and not by sight." It is our duty to avoid casting stumbling-blocks in our brother's way. It is our duty so to understand our age and to be in harmony with its knowledge that we shall not put before our people raw and foolish theories which irritate the thoughtful, which make the

righteous sad, and which bring profit to no one. But if we show reverence towards knowledge, if we patiently strive to understand our age and are sympathetic to catch its spirit, we shall be children of our age, able to convey to it our message, because able to translate eternal truth into the tongue of our own times.

II. But, if we ought to be the children of our age, we must take heed not to be its slaves. We are not to be its slaves, because our duty is towards eternity as well as time. We are to minister to the men of our own age, but we are to minister truths which belong to every age. We are men ministering in time, but we are men dealing with principles which are above time. We touch the eternities among the men of a day. And this is the very reason which has made me plead with you to know the language of your own age. If yours

was only an ephemeral message, the language in which it was told would be of little moment, but because yours is a message concerning things which endure, it is your part to make it clear and to translate it into the language which the people will understand. For the same reason we must be men unterrified and unseduced. It is not for us to pander to men's fancies or to sink to the level of the world's thoughts or customs; we are to be the vehicles of God's truth to our fellow-men. Do not therefore allow yourselves to become the slaves of the present. Do not be in a hurry to go after every strange or novel idea. Do not be the votary of shallow magazine literature. Scorn to pick up the cheap commonplaces of some second-rate writer and to serve them out to your people in the third-rate *fin de siècle* language. Remember that the essential principles with

which you have to deal never change. If, therefore, you are not to be the slave of your age, you must be in the possession of truths which you are perfectly convinced are outside the power of time to touch, and the power of human thought to change.

It was said by Marion Crawford of certain people that they had no indoors in their life. Unfortunately this is too true of many people. In crossing the threshold of their first acquaintance you have learned all there is to know of them. They are soon ransacked. They have no deep innermost life where dwell eternal convictions and thoughts of that which is high above the changing present. Such people become the sport of the hour, the victims of fashion, creatures at the mercy of the most threadbare periodical or the most vapid of theological novels. Our manhood should scorn to be such as these. The preacher's calling

demands more abiding moral characteristics and more conscientious exercise of thought. It is the preacher's function to witness to that which is changeless in the midst of that which is changing. Any one can be the messenger of change; but none can be a messenger of comfort to man who cannot speak of the unchangeable to those who weary amid life's vicissitudes. For changes are inevitable. To the young change is welcome, because novelty is sweet where hope is strong; but to those who have overpassed the springtime of life, change means loss and sorrow. Such grow tired of change. They ask for something fixed. They are familiar enough with the shifting scenes of the drama of life. They know what tragedies are unfolded in the development of the piece. They long to be assured that something abides in the tiring movements which bring sorrow and dismay.

They want some interpreting voice to tell them that there is a changeless wisdom which presides over these heart-breaking vicissitudes. They turn from the scenes which are so full of disappointment and disaster to listen to the comments, explanations, or lessons of the chorus. What the chorus was in ancient drama the preacher is called upon to be in the theatre of life, the witness of the permanent among the perishable.

But not for the sake of the people alone is this hold upon the permanent needful. It is needful for the preacher himself. You are most of you young, and it is the privilege of youth to hope for change, and to be convinced of its own unchangeableness. In the clear atmosphere of the morning every object is seen with distinctness; and the distinctness of vision is mistaken for the changelessness of the object. When we are

young we are very sure of what we see and of what we believe. We are gifted with a large confidence. We doubt the possibility that we shall ever change the views which seem so firmly fixed in our minds. But nothing is more certain than that, if we are worth anything, we shall change our views. Not to change is not to grow. The very law which regulates the growth of our moral stature carries with it the necessity of some change in our intellectual apprehensions. The man of fifty does not think in the same way as the young man of twenty. Great men have often shown their greatness in recanting their early opinions. Men as far apart in time and temper as St. Augustine and Richard Baxter were at one in this. St. Augustine wrote his Retractations, and Richard Baxter in his mellower days has told us how many opinions, which seemed to him important in his young

days, appeared to him insignificant in his maturer life. It is so with those who think and follow truth. It will be so with many of you. But for this very reason, I urge you to remember that you need to grasp the permanent amid the perishable. You need to lay hold of the kingdom which cannot be shaken, for be sure that the increase of knowledge and experience and the developments of life and thought will shape down many things which appear immovable now. You as much as your people need to have assurance of that which does not change; for without this how can your heart be fixed, or your message helpful in the world? There is one changelessness which I hope will not be yours. I would not have any of you, out of sheer dread of change, climb into the seat of smug and self-satisfied infallibilism. Though your calling is to be teachers of men,

remember that though you are teachers you are still men. The call to teach does not confer upon you immunity from error. The sacred and solemn hour which sets you apart from the world for your high and responsible function carries with it consecration of life, but not freedom from the possibility of mistake. It is only ignorance which imagines itself to be infallible; and it is arrogant ignorance which imagines that, in virtue of having put on a white tie, there is no question in heaven or earth, in science or theology, upon which it is not competent to give an opinion. Difficulties do not die at your ordination.

But neither would I have you fly to the opposite extreme, and pose as the infallibilist of uncertainty, the prophet who is certain that nothing is certain. If you have no message except to declare that there is neither moral order nor truth nor righteous-

ness in the world — that the universe is chaos and man's reason pulp — then why speak at all? Wherefore shouldest thou run, seeing thou hast no tidings?

No; if you are to be ministers to the sorrows and teachers of the ignorance of men, you must grasp something which is sure and changeless. You must be ready to speak with modesty, but also with conviction and moral earnestness. We may not, we cannot, claim to satisfy all the doubts, and to solve all the problems, which beset the minds of the men of our generation, but we may have, notwithstanding, a clear and assuring word for their hearts and consciences. For this we need to disentangle ourselves from the transient and insignificant points of brain-wearying controversies which disturb the world and distract the church. We need to go back to the simple and spiritual

attitude of the childlike in heart. *Ab exterioribus ad interiora: ab interioribus ad superiora.* The things without bewilder: there is an inner sanctuary, a holy of holies, in the soul of each man, from whose altar he may ascend to God. Our glance must never be only around us. We need to look upward and inward if we are to bear any true message to those who are around us. When the seer of the Apocalypse was about to set forth the terrible and heart-daunting drama of those principles which are in perpetual conflict in the story of the earth, he was shown first of all the vision of God and the sacred emblems of His eternal and righteous government. Before the scenes of carnage, confusion, and change were delineated, the immovable throne of the Changeless One was seen. The vision serves to remind us that, amid all the strange vicissitudes of human history, there

was a sovereignty which suffered no shock, no lessening or lowering of its power. In the foreground of the stage were the shifting scenes of human progress and human change: in the background, never leaving the stage, there was God's throne—God's presence, the Lamb as it had been slain, the Sevenfold Spirit of God. Whatever else might change, the relation between God and man did not change. God was still the Eternal God, the Father and Refuge of His people. The bond of love and sacrifice still bound heaven to earth and man to God. Still the Eternal Spirit, in manifold, varied, and constant power, might dwell in the hearts of men, instructing their minds and disciplining their lives. Here we may learn the lesson of the changeless truths which at all times it is given to us to declare. Whatever else may alter, however much our opinions

on minor matters may be modified from time to time, God is still the same, the Everlasting One, the Succour of His children, the Rock higher than man, the Everlasting One who fainteth not, neither is weary. Whatever confusion may fill our minds, in God who is the Father of all, in the Son in whom is redemption for all, in the Spirit by whom all may be sanctified, there is no change. In our weakness we may depend upon the Fatherly love of God. We may enter into fellowship with Him in the law of love and sacrifice revealed in Christ. And in the sustaining power of His Spirit we may grow up into His likeness till we are perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect.

These are truths and spiritual principles which do not change. We must lay hold of these principles if our message is to be a real and assuring one to men who live in the midst of so much that is liable to change.

In conclusion, there is one word I should like to say. If any helping message is to pass from you to men, your sermons must not be the mere product of your study, they must be the outcome of your heart, the expression of your innermost self and life. Avoid altogether, therefore, the habit of looking on your sermons as the necessary task to be undertaken as the week draws to its close. Let your sermons rather be the natural product of your own personal reading, praying, and living. Do not preach because the sermon is an inevitable duty, but because you are full of something which you long to say. Do not preach because you have to say something, but because you have something to say. Therefore be true to yourselves. Cultivate your own heart and character. Make reading and prayer and thought part of your daily life. Let your sermons rise naturally out

of what you have been finding true through your own study. In short, be devout men. Make the Bible—the Bible is no less the spiritual book of the world than it was before criticism became a science—make the Bible your constant study. Read, mark, learn, and that with the more earnestness because you live in a thinking and critical age. Let your sermons be, as much as possible, the outcome of this personal study of the Bible, the mellowed fruit of your own thought and prayer. Then you will go to the pulpit, not with the unsatisfactory feeling that your sermon has been hastily put together under the dire necessity of time-pressure, but that it is the calm, honest expression of intelligent and earnest conviction: it is that which you have seen, heard, looked upon, and which your hands have handled. It will then come straight from

your heart. It will be a true message, instinct with the tenderness of human sympathy, and glowing with the fire of God.

LECTURE VI

I WISH to speak to you, in this last lecture, on the aim of preaching. But before doing so, I would remind you of one characteristic feature of our age—I mean the force of public opinion. Public opinion has been in varying degree a power in the life of the world ; but it has been reserved for the last few centuries to realise the sovereign greatness of this power. As progress is made, this power is likely to increase ; and, speaking of our own age, I think few will disagree with the opinion of the late Earl of Carnarvon, that there is no greater known force than that of

public opinion. Now it is the preacher's duty to influence this confessedly great power. Public opinion is a strange aggregate of ideas, convictions, and sentiments. Thought, conscience, and affection, hold sway over men; and a man's views are generally the outcome of the influence of this combined sovereignty, modified by the power of that imitative faculty which puts men largely at the mercy of tradition, example, or contagion. By invoking, therefore, the powers of thought, conscience, and love, public opinion can be reached. By these avenues men may be won. To persuade men is the preacher's duty and privilege. If he is true to his calling and to the example of his Lord, he will scorn all baser modes of ascendency over men. He will realise, indeed, the importance of influencing public opinion, because, by its power, laws, which touch

the health, honour, and happiness of thousands, and customs, perhaps more influential than laws, are established. But more than public opinion, he will wish to influence men. He will certainly not care to ask whether his teaching is in harmony with public opinion or not. He does not seek to be popular. He seeks to draw men within the sacred circle of truth and righteousness. He is content to be a messenger, watchman, and steward, to teach and to premonish, to feed and provide for the Lord's family, and to seek for Christ's sheep that are dispersed abroad. He is to be a fisher of men. He is to seek that response which is deeper than any mere popular movement of public opinion, the response of the heart, the life, the character. He seeks not the applause, but the souls of men. Like the Apostle, "not yours, but you" is his motto.

I. Let me then say to you, keep clearly this aim in view. It is always important to have a clear and dominating realisation of the purpose of our work. Often, indeed in all the nobler aspects of life's work, we must act without clearly seeing the issue of our actions ; we must resolve on the venture of faith. But though the issue may often be obscure, the aim of our actions should be clear ; for the consciousness of purpose in our work exercises a strong and healthy influence upon us. The student knows that to study without discovering the purpose of a writer, is to lose the value of his teaching. We are like mariners on the ocean without a compass ; we are like critics without a conscience—we read into the work our own fancies, pet theories, or ill-temper.

"In every work regard the writer's end,
Since none can compass more than he intend."

If this is a sound principle for the student, and a wholesome counsel for the reviewer, it is a safe and wise one for the preacher. He too needs to keep in view his purpose, lest he fall below the true mark, or be carried away by the influences which tend to obscure this aim.

There are many such influences. Some of these are obvious enough. The criticism or the flattery of men may tempt us to lower our flag, or to aim at a less worthy end than the winning of men's souls. I need not speak of these temptations ; they are strong and obvious enough to those who know themselves. I select other influences less patent, but of real power. These are the monotony of work, the tyranny of method, and the spirit of clericalism.

1. There is the monotony of work. At the commencement this is not felt. Every-

thing is new, and what is new is ever delightful to those whose life is still before them. But when once we have "learned the ropes," the danger appears. We fall into the routine of the parish work. The services must be taken as a matter of course. The Sundays come round with amazing rapidity. The nervousness, which at first made us circumspect or anxiously careful, wears off. Every duty becomes a matter of course. Then comes the temptation to treat it as a matter of course. Then human nature is prone to choose the path of least resistance. We fall into a groove, and the groove will generally be found to be along the easiest road; and the easiest road is not always the road towards the highest goal. Our aim is to get through our work with the smallest possible trouble. We no longer wrestle with our work. We forget that our aim is to win souls. Monotony has fallen upon

us with paralysing power. The true end of our work is no longer clearly seen.

2. There is the tyranny of method. Every good thing has its shadow. Method is good, but a man may become the slave of method instead of its master; and in that case the thing which might be a help becomes a hindrance. In other words, we may fall into a set way of doing things, and the freshness may vanish from our work. We become mechanical; and in becoming mechanical, we become lifeless and ineffective. We lose sight of the end in the means. We think more of the machinery than of the work which the machinery is designed to do. We are content with things as they are. We have confidence in the methods to which we are accustomed. We distrust new methods. But this attitude of mind invites failure. The reason is simple. It is not always

because the old method is bad, and the new good, that the man who clings to the old fails; it is rather because the preference for the old is so often an idle preference. It is a sign of the indolence which shirks the trouble of trying anything new. The dislike of fresh enterprise is a symptom of the decay of vitality. It may be a token of the decline of mental energy, and even of moral earnestness; and even if it is not a sign of such a decadence of power, it may be a cause of it. The man who obstinately cleaves to old methods may lose moral force as a penalty of his obstinacy. It is needful to keep all our powers on the alert, and to be ready to employ every variety of lawful effort to achieve our end. Earth's laws are dead laws, said the Chinese sage, but Heaven's laws are living laws. The sign of intellectual vitality is often seen in the capacity to employ various methods to

attain one end. Dulness or indifference is content with one way. The thing has always been done that way—why trouble? Why trouble? Because the readiness to try a new way, or any way which will cause the work to be better done, is an evidence of a spirit which is in earnest not to get work done, but well done. Dulness is ready to quarrel with the living earnestness which tries various methods. It did so in our Lord's day. The dull and indifferent, unable to see in variety the proof of vigorous love, complained that variety was inconsistency. They were like the children in the market-place; they did not perceive in the different methods of the Baptist and of our Lord the evidence of that unchanging love which seeks in manifold ways to bring men to itself. The proof of an unchanging purpose lay in change of method. If, therefore, you

keep steadily in view the great aim of your work you will be quick and capable in varying your methods; you will not, I think, frame your sermons after one model. You will have your people in your mind. You will consider their needs, and you will weigh many plans with the view of selecting that which is most appropriate to their requirements. You will keep before your mind the true end of your preaching. You will not neglect the welfare of your people in order to please or glorify yourself by the adoption of some ambitious method. Architects have been known to build stately and noble churches in which no one can hear: the comfort and welfare of the people have been sacrificed to magnificence of effect. Others have built comely houses in which the staircases have been forgotten. It is thus that tyranny of method makes men

forget the real end of their work. Those who keep the purpose of their work in view show more alacrity of mind in adjusting means to the end. Love, with quickness of mind, is alive to its object. She will change her modes and vary her plans because she is constant to her aim. So will the true-hearted minister of Christ. He will become all things to all men, that he may by all means win some. If we would possess that freedom of spirit which is elastic in method because it is immovable in purpose, we must be on our guard against the tyranny of method.

3. There is the spirit of clericalism. You remember Gambetta's famous saying —"L'ennemi, c'est la clericalisme." We may not agree with the French statesman, but the words may serve as a text to warn us against a very real hindrance in work. I say in work, for it is true in all avocations

that one enemy of efficiency and vitality in work is clericalism. We all recognise the truth of this when we speak scornfully of Red Tape. There is a clericalism of law and of medicine, as well as of theology. We sometimes mean the same thing when we talk of professionalism. We feel that there is weakness, perhaps something worse than weakness, when the man is buried underneath his professionalism. "Now, doctor," said a shrewd-witted patient, "don't be professional, but tell me the truth." We see immediately what the patient meant. The man is often lost in his profession. His range of thought, his clearness of vision, perchance his veracity and his manhood, may be enslaved. This clericalism or professionalism may show itself in different forms. It may appear as dogmatism, or intellectualism, or as mere officialism.

(*a*) It may appear as dogmatism. We

know how much has been said about dogmatism in recent years. It is declared that people are impatient of dogmatism. When we ask what this means, pessimists declare that it is because the evil hearts of men dislike all doctrine, and would fain have a religion which is robbed of all distinctive teaching. And then they quote St. Paul, who tells of a time when men will not endure sound doctrine.

Now, gentlemen, I do not believe that this is a fair or adequate account of the matter. There may, of course, be some in every place who are impatient of order, reason, and law; but it is not, I think, true in any wide sense that people are impatient of teaching. On the contrary, I meet constantly with the very opposite view. I find many saying, I wish that our clergymen would really teach us. We do not so much want vehement or earnest

exhortations as clear and methodical teaching. Yet though this is true, we must admit that there is a very general dislike of dogmatism. We need therefore to ask what is this dogmatism of which people are impatient. It is not teaching itself which is objected to; nor is it teaching which is clear and definite, and which sets forth distinct principles of faith and conduct. It is rather that form of teaching in which truth is treated as a thing apart from life. It is that dogmatic insistence on the acceptance of a series of theological propositions, but which fails to bring them into line with the facts and needs of human life and experience. It is the preaching of theological theories instead of living truths. Theological theories may enshrine living truths, but they may be set forth in such a fashion that they sound only as arbitrary propositions. Truth to be true to men

must touch man and man's life. An anatomical museum is no doubt a most useful place for studying the structure of the human frame; but it does not interest everybody. It is a display of dead truth. The sight of a little child building sand-castles on the shore has more of life in it. The bones of men are not men. The scientific parade of theology is not religious teaching. "As art for mere art's sake ends in depraved taste, so mere theology ends in depraved religion"—so wrote Julius Hare. It is a true saying, and one which we do well to lay to heart. The resentment of people is not against religious teaching, but against the arid dogmatism which is offered to them as a substitute for it. This is the danger which besets us. But here again we shall find the careful remembrance of the aim of preaching a protection to us. We shall remember that

our purpose is to win men's souls. We shall therefore be under the necessity of considering our teaching in the light of human need. We shall not be satisfied with setting dry bones before our people. We shall seek to feed them with food convenient for them. We shall be earnest in maintaining principles, but we shall seek to make them principles of life. We shall strive to show that the things of God are things of man, because we believe that whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, and that the message of God must have a fitness for man.

(*b*) Besides this dogmatism, clericalism may appear in the guise of intellectualism. Even the man who honestly seeks to teach may not escape this temptation, for there is a snare which waits on teaching. It is the snare which arises from interesting

passages. Teaching may degenerate into clever or erudite expositions of these interesting passages. The expository teacher may be caught in this snare. The delight of unfolding unexpected meanings, the keen intellectual pleasure of disentangling the true sense from the false, and the attraction afforded by historical or geographical comments on the text, may absorb the attention, and the moral and spiritual purpose of preaching may be forgotten. But let us keep in view the real aim, and all these intellectual methods will be made subordinate to that aim.

(*c*) Lastly, this clericalism may appear in the form of officialism. This is the least pleasing perhaps of all. There is a true and valid meaning in the Apostle's declaration, "I magnify mine office"; but there is a petty self-important officialism which is the very opposite of St. Paul's exaltation

of his calling. No man indeed can value too highly an office of so great dignity and of so great difficulty as that of the minister of Christ; but he alone magnifies his office whose whole soul is intent upon making himself day by day more fit for its duties. He magnifies his office aright who approves himself as the minister of God "by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left" (2 Cor. vi. 6, 7). He, on the other hand, brings his office into contempt who presumes on his official position to claim respect for his absurdities, and who delights to throw into ludicrous prominence his little brief authority. The truth is that egotism easily creeps under the cassock; and a clergyman may make himself and

his position the centre of his thoughts. He may judge everything by its bearing on his office and authority. But if he does so, he will find that his office is dishonoured, and his authority will be flung to the winds. Happier is he who keeps in mind the end of his ministry, and thinks of himself as the servant of God, set for the help of the world. He will remember that his work is to win men to righteousness and to God. All his thoughts will revolve round this centre. All events will be measured by reference to this object. Self will be less and less; God will be more and more; and his joy will be in any labour, necessity, or distress which will make righteousness and the love of God known and obeyed by men.

Once again, then, let me urge you to keep clearly in mind and to have always printed in your memory the true aim of preaching.

It is not for the applause of men, still less is it for self-glory. It is to win men to the love of good and to the love of God. It is to bring them into allegiance to the spirit of Christ. It is to rouse in them enthusiasm for righteousness, love of their kind, and faith in the laws and purposes of God. It is the aim which was Christ's in His life and death—it is to bring them to God.

II. You will not think it strange that I say to you in the next place—Realise your authority.

Keep clear before you the aim of your teaching, but realise also your authority.

1. Realise in the first place that it is bestowed on you for a purpose. It is that which the Lord hath given you for edification, and not for destruction. Not for destruction. It is not yours to cast darkness or doubt upon men's hearts. It

is not for you to fling out wild denunciations, still less to hurl out anathemas. Only the infallible may venture to do this. Remember that it often happens that what a clergyman says is invested in the mind of some simple listener with a weight and authority far higher than it merits. "I heard it in church" is with some as sufficient for faith as "I read it in print" is for others. It will not do for us to shake off the responsibility by saying that such people are foolish. The foolish, the ignorant, and such as are out of the way are entitled to our consideration. Towards these we must show compassion. We must be jealous over ourselves lest we lead these astray. Our utterances must always be such that they may prove helpful to others. We must take heed lest we cause a weak brother to stumble. Our influence, our authority, and our office are for salvation

and not for ruin, for life and not for death, for hope and not for dismay, for edification and not for destruction.

2. Realise your authority. By this I mean, however, not realise to yourselves that you have an authority, but make it real in itself, and in its influence in the world. At the commencement of your work this authority is only formal and potential. It is only as experience, knowledge, and spiritual force are gained that it becomes actual. You have, indeed, at the first, authority to act in certain ways—to conduct the service, to administer the rites of the Church, to visit, and to preach the Gospel. But, as in every other calling, your capacity for work matures with use and honest endeavours aided by diligent study and prayer. When then I say "Realise your authority," I mean use all your power and patience to make it real, in real,

not in mere formal, fashion. Let it be an authority which is not so much asserted as conceded. When authority is formally and ostentatiously claimed, it is as often as not denied. On the other hand, when authority has once been won by having made itself real, it is admitted without being claimed. As long as your authority is only outward and formal, you gain little by having it conceded: you lose disastrously in imperiously thrusting it forward. But when once influence has made itself felt within, when the truth spoken has won the inward response of the conscience and heart, then you have no need to put forward claims which have already been made good in the souls of men. In other words, let your authority become real in having a real and ethical basis in the moral natures of your hearers. It was the Apostle who said, We preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus the

Lord, who was able also to say that by manifestation of the truth he sought to commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God (2 Cor. iv. 5 and 2). If we thus make our authority real, we shall take one safe path to make men realise it.

But we shall not leave other paths untrodden. As we desire to make men realise the true character of our message, we shall seek the knowledge of men, and skill in the fitting ways of approaching them.

3. Knowledge of men is indispensable for our work. It is only reasonable to say that some knowledge of the nature of those whom we seek to win is requisite. He is a poor fisherman who has not studied in some sort the ways and habits of the fish he seeks. He is a poor parson who does not understand something of human nature. Now this knowledge of human nature, as a

rule, comes only with years and experience. Doubtless, there is a gift of insight bestowed in varying degrees upon men; and this may be, though rarely, an endowment of the young. But this is unusual. Knowledge of human nature, insight into its processes and motives, is, as a rule, the heritage of men who have reached maturity, and who have exercised their powers of observation and reflection. But whether this knowledge comes early as a gift, or late as an acquisition, the preacher who does not possess it must remain ineffective. St. Chrysostom's knowledge of human nature was as evident as his knowledge of the Bible. His sermons hold up the mirror to man. He knew well how to show vice its own image. It would not be difficult to derive from his homilies a portrait gallery of typical men. There is no need to insist on this point. Only he

who knows men can speak to men. The need of this knowledge is evident. How can it be acquired? There are only two answers to this question, I think. Knowledge of human nature can only be gained through the study of books and of men.

(*a*) By books. I put this first, not as being the most important or effective means to this end, but merely to insist on the fact that there are books which do give us insight into the working of the human soul. Men who have been called upon to influence their fellow-men have recognised this. St. Chrysostom was a diligent student of Aristophanes. This example may stand as a type. It may remind us that the study of the great dramatists is the study of human nature. The poet who sings of the flower and of the bird may delight us. His music is sweet when we are tired of toil, perhaps disgusted with men. To

listen to him is like sitting under the grateful shade and listening to the music of the songster who rises skyward. But as man is greater than the flower and the bird, so the poet is greatest who can make man his theme. The whole range of the literature of the great poets of man lies open to us. In their pictures we may see life in miniature and recognise other men's portraits and our own. Sophocles, Terence, Shakespeare, Molière, Goethe may be our helpers in this study. History, too, will aid us here, and if we are wise we shall not forget the sacred literature of the Old and New Testaments, wherein prophet and historian, philosopher and apostle, and chiefly He who spake as never man spake, combine to show us what is in man.

(*b*) But the study of books tends to theory. From the study of books we may only make the acquaintance of "bookish"

men ; we must go to life also. The power of Velasquez as a portrait-painter lay in his sense of the individual : "Bien comprendre son homme est la première qualité du portraitiste." The preacher too must understand man and men ; and he can only adequately do this by that best of teachers, experience. However expert we may be in drama and history, we need to know something of the living flesh and blood, the perplexed minds, the sorrowing hearts and troubled consciences of the men of our own generation. I repeat, therefore, what I have already spoken of before, be wise enough to know your people personally. Visiting will often prove the armoury of the preacher. It will supply him with many a weapon. I do not mean that the confidences of the home and of the heart are to be made the opportunities of the pulpit—only a vulgar mind parades in

public these personal sanctities. It is in quite another fashion that visiting gives aid to preaching. Smart and shallow men may be tempted to make capital out of the concrete instance. The true-hearted and honest student works back to principles, and slowly accumulates from the experience of many individual cases that mature and sympathetic knowledge of man which gives him an insight and a power of exposition which is almost prophetic. I cannot leave this point without reminding you of one aspect of this study of human nature which opens to all an opportunity of knowledge. I mean the knowledge of self which comes from honest, but not morbid, self-examination. Know thyself—the counsel is never out of season. Know yourself, for your own sake. Know yourself, for out of self-knowledge often springs the knowledge of others. When Massillon was asked

whence he had derived his knowledge of human nature, he replied, "By the knowledge of myself." Human hearts have kinship all the world over; and he who knows one human heart, even if it be his own, has found a key which will unlock the hearts of thousands.

To gain this knowledge of men is to be on the high road to the possession of wisdom in approaching men. Those who heard Bourdaloue's sermons were filled with wonder at the strategic skill with which he advanced upon the hearts of his hearers. He threw out his arguments, he hemmed in his adversary, and only delivered his main attack after he had made retreat impossible. There was consummate ability in this. It illustrates the duty of laying hold upon men. Our best efforts must be directed to this end. And for this end we must approach men through the

avenues of the conscience and of the affections.

(*c*) Through the conscience. You must do this, for till you have touched the moral sense you have missed the mark. You are not a politician who wants men's votes, nor a professional who wants their applause, nor a cheap-jack who wants their money. You seek the response of the conscience. You seek its homage to the laws of the kingdom of righteousness. Your appeal must be to the conscience. Here you have a force which does not change. In the shifting opinions of men, in the advance of knowledge, in the changes of taste, there is small prospect of firm standing-ground. But the sense of right and wrong remains. This power is changeless in humanity. We may alter our opinions about what is right and wrong: as the race makes progress this must necessarily be the case. The

sense of wrong should deepen and widen. The rough-handed brutalities of earlier ages are intolerable to us to-day. The balances of the conscience become more sensitive as God educates men. But the power to weigh right and wrong is the changeless right of the conscience. The sceptre which the conscience wields is an imperious sceptre. Specious arguments and special pleadings are swept away. When the ark was opened, the pot of manna and the rod of Aaron had disappeared; the tables of the law written and graven in stone remained. The emblems of miraculous sustenance and official authority had vanished in the lapse of generations; but the moral law was there, unchanged, and still in force. To the moral sense we may appeal. If not in form, yet the work of the law is written in men's hearts; conscience bears witness, and men's thoughts accuse or else excuse

one another (Rom. ii. 15). To the conscience the apostle appealed (2 Cor. i. 12, iv. 2). The response of the conscience was sought by our Lord. We have only to turn to the narrative of His conversation with the woman of Samaria to see this exemplified. He first awakened her yearning for a life more restful than her own ; He then struck home to her conscience—"Go, call thy husband." She attempts to fence. He presses home the truth—"He whom thou now hast is not thy husband" (John iv. 16-18). In another fashion, in the case of the sick of the palsy, Christ touches the conscience. "Thy sins be forgiven thee" are His first words. They seem irrelevant, but they are in truth the message for which the uneasy conscience of the sufferer has thirsted. Far worse than the physical weakness which sin has brought upon him is the haunting remembrance of

the sin itself. The conscience is touched, and the heart is stirred.

(*d*) The heart is stirred. The message to the conscience alone is not enough. Indeed, only the tender-hearted who wing their message with love can provoke the true response of the conscience. Many upright-minded people who have a stern hatred of wrong-doing are powerless to move or melt the wrong-doer's heart. Highly conscientious folk are often powerless to raise the fallen, because they come with the words of reproach and the hard law of retribution in their hands. They tear open the wound. They hardly realise that perchance the wound is painful to the wounded one. They awaken anger, perhaps even just resentment, because in their determination to be outspoken and honest they have taken a narrow and unfair view of the case. In maintaining the standard of righteousness they have used

words which have done an injustice to the sinner. They have made the sore heart more sore. They have alienated sympathy. They went armed with the law; they brought no oil of love to the wounded one. Far otherwise was our Lord's action. He always brought hope to the heart that He sought to win. He did not avoid the painful truth. The sick of the palsy had been guilty of sin; and our Lord speaks of his misconduct as sin—"Thy sins be forgiven thee." But He speaks with love. The man has fallen; the man has suffered; but he is no outcast from love. He is a son, God's son, still—"Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee."

Truth without tenderness misses the mark. Remember St. Augustine's precept, "Magis monendo quam minando." Let love therefore mingle with your witness to righteousness. Let the appeal to the con-

science be spoken with the force of sympathy. We need this power more than we know. The eye of youth, though it can see visions, cannot always discern the need of this power. It is no mere flabby sentiment which weakens the force of your appeal; it is a force which invigorates and intensifies that appeal, for it enables the preacher to keep in mind his duty of winning men. It widens his horizon. It enables him to discriminate essential ethical righteousness from the mint, anise, and cummin, to which are too often given both a ludicrous importance and a moral value to which they have no claim. We need in pressing home moral truths to possess a clear discriminating power. He is no preacher of righteousness who invents new sins, or who treats the varieties of custom or habit or individual feeling, which distinguish human race and temperament, as

matters of vast ethical moment. It is no sign of spiritual ripeness to see sin in things indifferent. Richard Cecil spoke a great truth when he said that one sign of the matured and mellowed Christian life was the possession of "less of scrupulosity and more of tenderness of conscience." This spirit—earnest for righteousness, free from pedantic scruples, instinct with loving purpose—carries with it a wondrous power. It is much more than morality tinged with emotion; it is righteousness inspired by love. Such was the spirit of our Lord. He maintained and manifested sternly and strenuously righteousness before men. Yet with what matchless tenderness He spoke and acted. Nay, His very love made righteousness more vivid and more attractive to men. To sin, as such, He was stern and uncompromising. To sinful ways masked by hypocrisy He gave no quarter.

To the sinning, He was unfailing in His compassion. Love taught Him the sweetest artifices to win back the erring. His words touched old chords in the heart, awakened forgotten memories, and called forth dormant aspirations; and then the weary and heavy-laden crept to His side, and the poor, world-despised, fallen one braved the angry and averted looks of men to wash His feet with tears (Matth. xi. 20-30, and Luke vii. 36-50). To such He spoke the reassuring words, "Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace." We vainly try to storm men's consciences by terror. Unless love be in our hearts, we lose as much as we gain; for since He who rules on the throne of the Universe is love, and since Christ came to reveal that love to us, we may be sure that love, and love alone, is omnipotent in the spiritual world. Love will crown your authority. This spirit

carries its own credentials with it. In jealousy for righteousness and in tenderness of love, you will best make men realise the authority of your utterance.

III. There remains one thing more. Have faith in your message. We live in an age of quickly-changing thoughts, and the difficulties of the times carry with them temptations. The old ways are played out. We must go with the times. Timid conservatism is always barren. We must meet the age with its own weapons. There is a sense in which we may cordially agree with this appeal to employ new methods. If it means that we should be ready to adapt our methods to new needs, the appeal is wise and harmless enough; and of the folly of refusing it I have already spoken. But sometimes this language means something very different. Sometimes it conveys, not the spirit of the vigorous earnestness

which strives by all means to win men, but the spirit of despair and flat unbelief in the power of God's love and God's spirit among men. Then it embodies, not the wish to win men to God, but the thirst for men's applause or for men's adhesion to a particular party. Temptations are ready at hand. Under the plausible plea of new methods, all sorts of doubtful expedients are tried. The man, having no message from God to give, essays desperate, perhaps undignified, methods of filling his church. He will engage distinguished soloists. He will approximate his methods as nearly as may be to those of a music-hall. The idea of worship recedes into the background. The Church is no longer the home of souls, the birthplace of new spiritual resolves, the quiet place where God meets with men and the voice of His message is heard. It is a successful enterprise. It is

full. It is popular. But it is no longer the house of prayer, or the gate of heaven to tired and sin-wearied souls.

The man who retains faith in his message will resort to no such vulgar expedients. He has a message to give. It is his to deliver it. Whether men hear or whether they forbear, he must deliver his soul. Success in the shape of crowded audiences is not his affair. Success in the sense of doing his best to make his message clear, forcible, and loving, and of bringing men to realise the near, righteous, and loving God, is his desire. Believing that he has a message, and believing in the message which he has, his own supreme aim is that, where he can and as he can, the message should be spoken. He feels that popularity-seeking expedients are needless. Christianity is still fitted to do its work. "The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the

ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary" (Isaiah xl. 28). His word and message shall prosper in the thing whereto He sends it.

Have faith in your message. It is still a strong, heart-reaching, and unfailing message. It is the message of the love which encircles human life, which redeems human frailty, which dwells in human hearts. If it seem to us weaker and less apt to achieve victory than in the days of yore, it is not because God has changed, or the force of His love, or the truth of His word; it is because we grasp His hand with less firmness and less courage than they of old did. But if His strength and love remain the same, the wonderful works which were done of old may be wrought anew in our generation. If this be thought by some to be too good to be true, remember Ruskin's caution that

the highest unfaith lies in such a sentiment, for it means that it is possible for us to conceive a good beyond God's power to make true, and that God has given us laws and principles which we can appreciate, but which will not work. No, let us dismiss this despondency of unfaith. In our day and generation one word of assurance is opening to us more clearly than to the men of the past. We no longer look to the marvellous for the attestation of the moral, for we may find in the moral itself fresh wonders and an unfailing witness of things spiritual. In man's nature we may find an evidence higher than the miraculous could afford. In the things within us, rather than in the things above us, we may find the true soul of life.

> "You'll find the soul you have missed
> Within yourself."

"The man who wrote that book made

me," was the language of the native who was aiding Bishop Boone in his translation of the Bible. "I believe this to be God's book because it is man's book," has been the thought if not the language of thousands. For in spite of all the vexed questions of miracles and criticism, the spiritual and moral power of the sacred message finds response in the hearts to which it is sent. The spirit of Christ is recognised everywhere as the true spirit which, living in human hearts, would bring about the true revolution and the golden age. He has become the conscience of humanity. He is His own witness. He is the door, and He also enters by it; and as He enters, He is recognised as the Shepherd of mankind.

If you will but preach simple Christ to simple men, you will have no reason to doubt the power of God in the nine-

teenth century. This means much. It means certain and solemn verities which are believed among us. But it means more. It means a message for society. It means a message for the Church. It means a message to men. In the world it means the regeneration of the world. In the soul it means the inspiration of the soul. In the hereafter it means satisfaction. "When I wake up after Thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with it." Study this message till you know it, till you love it, till you assimilate it.

Never leave off this study. Seek to increase in stature and strength. Doubt will grow less and less, though the reasons of doubt may grow more and more. Your grasp upon the inward and spiritual will be too strong. The world and life you will feel to be, as Browning said, "too big to pass for a dream." It will be

"no blot for you, nor blank." It will mean "intensely and mean good." Your message will be to you more simple and more real from day to day, your faith in it more strong; and that, because your faith and hope will be in God, and because you will have clearer vision of Him who is alive for evermore, and who is with you always, even unto the end of the world.

THE END

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